

THE WORLD'S 100 GREATEST PLACES

of 2021



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for TIME

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Conversation



WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT...

A GAMES LIKE NO OTHER Readers found themselves limbering up for the Tokyo Olympics with the stories in TIME's July 19/July 26 issue. Mike Karpfen of Hesperus, Colo., said the "fascinating" series of athlete profiles inspired him "to watch the Games for the first time in years." Tennis player Naomi Osaka's essay reflecting on mental health and self-care in the sports world sparked a particularly passionate response.

'Every good wish for this young woman's tenacity.'

LESLEIGH JOAN TOLIN,
Encino, Calif.

"Thank you for continuing this important conversation about mental health awareness in the workplace," New York City First Lady Chirlane McCray wrote on Twitter. "Doesn't she have the right to a sick day like everyone else without disclosing the details to the public?" tweeted Lisa Johnson of Boston. "Yes. Of course!"

But Walt Conte of Delaware, Ohio, wrote that "rules are rules," arguing that Osaka could "show up for the press interviews and then not answer questions." And on Twitter, @here_venting noted the often prohibitive cost of many mental-health treatments: "I support and respect her for standing her ground and sharing her struggle with mental

health. But stories like this need to also address the fact that in the U.S. not being OK isn't an option for many." Other readers shared concerns about the physical health of athletes (and staffers) at the Tokyo Games amid the COVID-19 pandemic. "The world has bigger problems

'Admitting when you need a mental break ... is just plain smart.'

@SARASIDNERCNN,
on Twitter

than who will win the 100-m race," argued Dennis Fitzgerald of Melbourne.



Ready for launch

A multisensory exhibit called "The Infinite"—part of the Primetime Emmy-nominated virtual reality series *Space Explorers: The ISS Experience*, by TIME Studios and Felix & Paul Studios—was created in partnership with PHI Studio and is now open at Montreal's Arsenal Contemporary Art. *The ISS Experience* documents life aboard the International Space Station; in an hour-long "immersive journey," visitors to "The Infinite" will get to experience what it's like to be an astronaut. Buy tickets at theinfiniteexperience.com and watch clips from the series at time.com/space-explorers

KID OF THE YEAR

The search is on for 2021's Kid of the Year. In December, scientist Gitanjali Rao, 15, was named the inaugural Kid of the Year during a TV special hosted by Trevor Noah on Nickelodeon; she and four runners-up appeared in TIME. The next TV special is expected to air in early 2022, and submissions are due Aug. 31. Check out nickkidoftheyear.com for rules and eligibility criteria.



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SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ▶ In "Past Tense" (July 5/July 12), we misstated whether government-registered nonprofits are not required to publicly disclose their donors. Some types of nonprofit groups must do so.

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Introducing ATEM Mini Pro

The compact television studio that lets you create presentation videos and live streams!

Blackmagic Design is a leader in video for the television industry, and now you can create your own streaming videos with ATEM Mini. Simply connect HDMI cameras, computers or even microphones. Then push the buttons on the panel to switch video sources just like a professional broadcaster! You can even add titles, picture in picture overlays and mix audio! Then live stream to Zoom, Skype or YouTube!

Create Training and Educational Videos

ATEM Mini's includes everything you need. All the buttons are positioned on the front panel so it's very easy to learn. There are 4 HDMI video inputs for connecting cameras and computers, plus a USB output that looks like a webcam so you can connect to Zoom or Skype. ATEM Software Control for Mac and PC is also included, which allows access to more advanced "broadcast" features!

Use Professional Video Effects

ATEM Mini is really a professional broadcast switcher used by television stations. This means it has professional effects such as a DVE for picture in picture effects commonly used for commentating over a computer slide show. There are titles for presenter names, wipe effects for transitioning between sources and a green screen keyer for replacing backgrounds with graphics.

Live Stream Training and Conferences

The ATEM Mini Pro model has a built in hardware streaming engine for live streaming via its ethernet connection. This means you can live stream to YouTube, Facebook and Teams in much better quality and with perfectly smooth motion. You can even connect a hard disk or flash storage to the USB connection and record your stream for upload later!

Monitor all Video Inputs!

With so many cameras, computers and effects, things can get busy fast! The ATEM Mini Pro model features a "multiview" that lets you see all cameras, titles and program, plus streaming and recording status all on a single TV or monitor. There are even tally indicators to show when a camera is on air! Only ATEM Mini is a true professional television studio in a small compact design!

ATEM Mini..... **US\$295**

ATEM Mini Pro..... **US\$495**

ATEM Mini Pro ISO..... **US\$795**



‘IT SENDS A MESSAGE OF TOTAL INTIMIDATION: DON’T REPORT. DON’T TELL THE TRUTH.’

SWATI CHATURVEDI, Indian investigative journalist whose phone was targeted in the Pegasus spyware hack that affected media figures, politicians and activists, in an interview with TIME published July 19

‘I’m writing this not as the prince I was born but as the man I have become.’

PRINCE HARRY, in a July 19 statement announcing the 2022 publication of a “definitive” and “wholly truthful” memoir

2

Number of Americans, a father and son, sent to prison on July 19 for their role in the 2019 escape of former Nissan executive Carlos Ghosn from Japan, where he is wanted on charges of financial misconduct that he denies



‘As a society, we must dare to stop and ask ourselves why we want to exploit a resource.’

NAAJA NATHANIELSEN, Greenland’s Minister for Housing, Infrastructure, Mineral Resources and Gender Equality, in a July 15 statement accompanying news that the country will be suspending all future plans for oil exploration in its territory

\$73,499

Minimum cost of a ticket (per person) for a suite on a 132-night round-the-world cruise scheduled to begin in January 2024; the voyage sold out entirely within hours of being made available for bookings on July 15



‘Cardboard beds are actually stronger than [ones] made of wood or steel.’

AIRWEAVE, a Japanese bedding company, in a July 20 statement clarifying that cardboard beds at the Tokyo Olympics were not designed to prevent athletes from having sex, as had been speculated

‘Some of the stars I produced are actually made of garbage.’

DONALD TRUMP, former U.S. President, in a July 15 statement attacking unnamed former aides who’ve participated in books about his Administration



GOOD NEWS of the week

A gingham pinafore believed to have been worn by Judy Garland while filming *The Wizard of Oz* was found at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., the university said on July 9

The Brief

DEADLY DELUGE
A section of a castle
partially destroyed
by heavy rain and
flooding in Erftstadt,
Germany, on July 16



INSIDE

BIDEN WEIGHS U.S. RESPONSE
TO CUBA'S PROTESTERS

A HERD OF WANDERING
ELEPHANTS ENGROSSES CHINA

JUDGE JUDY'S COURTROOM
CLOSES AFTER 25 YEARS

PHOTOGRAPH BY DOCKS COLLECTIVE

The Brief is reported by Madeleine Carlisle, Tara Law, Sanya Mansoor, Ciara Nugent, Billy Perrigo, Nik Popli and Olivia B. Waxman

TheBrief Opener

WORLD

Floods expose the West's hubris

By Ciara Nugent

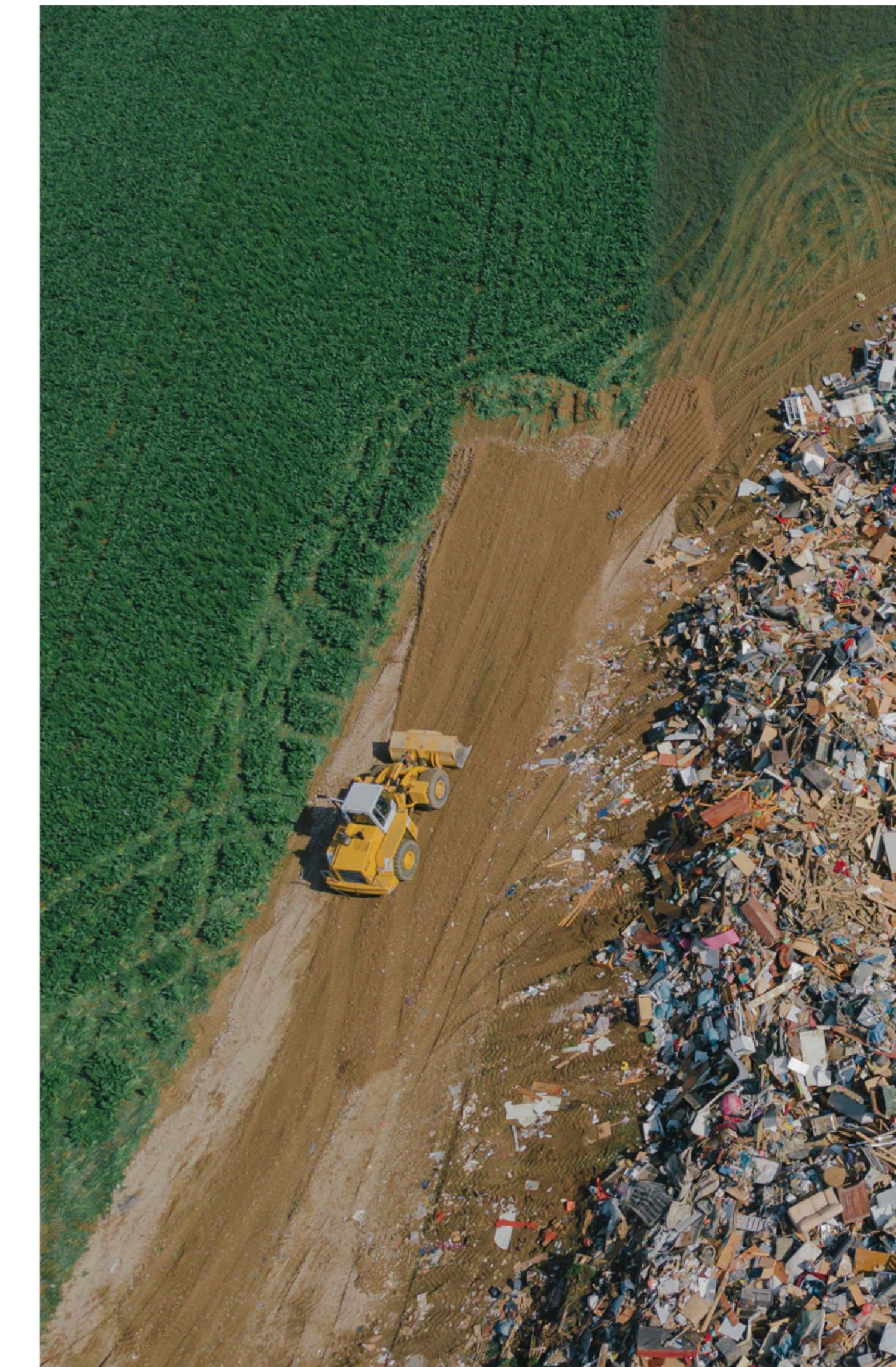
PIA NEGRO'S FAMILY HAS LIVED IN A CASTLE IN Erftstadt, in western Germany, for 300 years. They have spent the past 30 years restoring it to its former glory. But they left it in minutes on July 15, evacuating at around 4 a.m. as the worst floods to hit the country in centuries rushed toward their home. "We couldn't bring anything—not the very old furniture, not even photos that are highly emotional, just our phones," says Negro, 32.

The castle's 40 inhabitants, including Negro's family and renters, had spent the previous day moving furniture to higher floors and went to bed that night once the rains had stopped. But as they slept, muddy waters continued to rise in two nearby rivers. Soon after the residents evacuated, the castle and surrounding village were submerged almost entirely. What's left of the building remains inaccessible, Negro says. "We are just in shock that something like that can happen to our home."

Accustomed to a mild climate rarely troubled by extremes of weather, many in northwestern Europe hadn't anticipated just how bad the floods would be. From July 14 to July 15, as much as 7 in. of rain fell on parts of the western German states Rhineland-Palatinate and North Rhine-Westphalia—roughly double the normal rainfall for the whole of July—overwhelming riverbanks and sweeping away entire buildings. At least 170 people died in Germany and 31 in Belgium. Scores are missing. "The German language has no words, I think, for the devastation," German Chancellor Angela Merkel said as she surveyed the damage in Schuld, a village on the River Ahr.

It will need them. As a result of climate factors and a lack of resources, developing countries have long borne the brunt of extreme weather events. In Madagascar, for example, the worst drought in 40 years is currently driving 400,000 people into famine. But the summer of 2021 is showing us that nowhere is safe in the climate-crisis era. In June, a village in western Canada briefly became one of the hottest places on earth—just before 90% of it was destroyed by a wildfire. Days after the flooding in Europe, the Chinese province of Henan saw what officials called "once in 1,000 years" rain, which flooded subway tunnels and drowned commuters.

People in countries like Germany, with robust governance and typically predictable weather, are reeling from the loss of a sense of safety in the face of climate change. "We live in a society that thinks it can control nature. And now people are feeling powerless against it," says Albi Roebke, an emergency chaplain deployed to counsel hundreds of survivors in North Rhine-Westphalia. "We have to be afraid of water and fire, like our ancestors 40,000 years ago. That's very difficult for people to understand."



A debris-collection point set up in the German town of Rheinbach on July 17; local residents visited the site to dump home furnishings ruined by the flooding

STUDIES WILL NEED to be done to prove that Europe's heavy rains were a direct result of climate change. But scientists say it is safe to assume it made them worse. Warmer air can hold more moisture—7% more for every 1°C increase in temperature—and Germany's average temperature has risen by at least 1.5°C since pre-industrial times. Another possible factor is the shrinking difference in temperature between the polar regions and the equator, which could weaken global air currents, allowing low-pressure systems like the one over Western Europe in mid-July to stay in one place for a longer time. A similar effect may have helped trigger the "heat dome" over western Canada and the U.S. Northwest at the end of June.

DOCKS COLLECTIVE



With climate change, “at some point, an event which would have been just heavy rainfall without too much damage is suddenly a really catastrophic event,” says Karsten Haustein, a climate scientist at the Climate Service Center Germany, a research body. “That threshold will simply be crossed more often.”

The death toll in Germany may have been made worse by a sense of complacency about the risks of extreme weather, experts say. On July 12, German meteorologists warned of severe floods, and the national flood system issued an alert, but many say regional and local authorities did not successfully communicate risks to the public. In at least four instances, people drowned in their basements, possibly while trying to save their belongings. Others died

while trying to move their cars to higher ground. “People thought, Yeah, I guess it’s going to rain a lot. But they don’t know what that means,” Haustein says. “We have to get rid of this thought that somehow extreme and severe weather cannot impact us—this is the climate hubris we have going on in Europe.”

In terms of cutting emissions, Europe’s leaders have done more than most to respond to climate change. In the same week the floods hit, the European Commission presented its plan to overhaul E.U. economies by 2030 to cut greenhouse-gas emissions 55%, compared with 1990 levels.

Germans are more likely than other European citizens to consider climate action a top priority, according to regional polls. The country’s Green Party

was already projected to make significant gains in September elections, and the floods have thrust the climate to the center of the campaign. Analysts say that could help the Greens’ candidate for Chancellor, Annalena Baerbock, recover some ground lost in polls in recent weeks. Her main rival, Armin Laschet of Merkel’s center-right party, is the governor of North Rhine–Westphalia. He may suffer if voters blame him for the state’s lack of flood preparedness.

EVEN THE GREENEST governments and the most rapid emissions cuts will not be able to reverse the nascent destabilization of our climate. A certain amount of further warming is already baked into our future, since carbon dioxide lingers in the atmosphere for at least 300 years and will keep trapping more heat. Recent extremes are not a “new normal,” scientists say, but likely evidence of the end of any kind of normal or stable climate altogether.

For that reason, experts say that in the coming months, governments urgently need to widen their priorities to include adapting to climate instability. It’s something developing countries in the global south have long known. But so far, wealthier countries have dedicated just 5% of international climate finance to adaptation initiatives, despite a long-held pledge to split aid 50-50 between emissions cuts and adaptation. As world leaders gear up for COP26, a major U.N. climate summit in November, this summer’s events may finally force wealthy countries to take adaptation seriously.

This will mean preparing to deal with an inevitable increase in natural disasters. “We need to reshape disaster management,” Baerbock, the Green candidate for Chancellor, told local media in July. “And the federal government needs to take more responsibility for it.”

It will mean costly efforts to make homes, transport and infrastructure much more resilient to heat, rain and droughts. It may also mean expanding and formalizing our systems for cleaning up after disasters. At the very least, it means better warning systems and more public awareness that extreme weather is a real threat—whatever country you live in. □

NEWS TICKER

More officials report 'Havana syndrome'

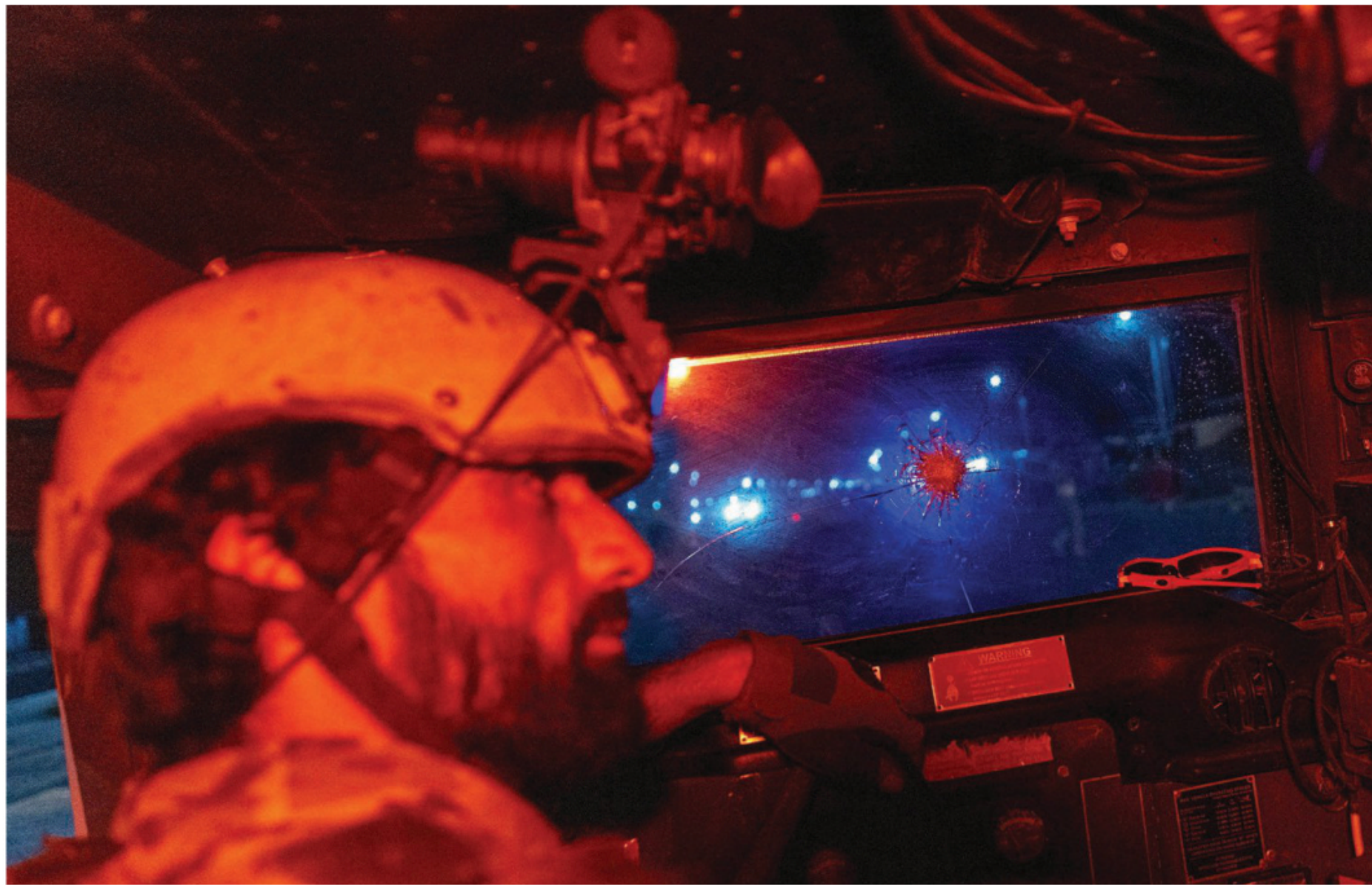
The U.S. State Department is now “vigorously investigating” reports from **two dozen spies, diplomats and other officials based in Vienna** of symptoms—including headaches, vision issues and vertigo—similar to those previously reported by U.S. officials in Havana in 2016 and 2017, the *New Yorker* reported on July 16.

U.S. life expectancy drops in 2020

Driven mostly by the COVID-19 pandemic, the **average American's life expectancy fell by 1.5 years** from 2019 to 2020, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced on July 21. The decrease was especially pronounced among Black and Hispanic populations.

Hungary's PM calls for vote on LGBTQ law

Prime Minister Viktor Orban proposed a referendum on **a new law banning LGBTQ educational content** on July 21, to ask the Hungarian public if it supports the “promotion” of such materials. The European Parliament has labeled the law a “gradual dismantling of fundamental rights.”



CALL TO DUTY In a photograph taken by Danish Siddiqui on July 11, a member of the Afghan Special Forces participates in a combat mission against the Taliban in Afghanistan's Kandahar province. Five days later, the 38-year-old Siddiqui, a Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist from India who had worked for Reuters for over a decade, was killed while covering another bout of fighting near the country's border with Pakistan. Thirty-three journalists and other media workers have been killed in Afghanistan from 2018 to 2021, according to a U.N. report published this year. —Tara Law

WORLD

Cuba protests highlight the role of the Internet, and the U.S.

CHANTING “FREEDOM!” AND “ENOUGH!” thousands of Cubans marched on July 11 in the island's largest antigovernment protest in decades. The pandemic's impact on the state-run economy, already struggling under Trump-era sanctions, has sparked the nation's worst food and medicine shortages in 25 years. Empty supermarket shelves, rising COVID-19 infections and recent access to social media, where Cubans now openly share their outrage, all helped foment unprecedented protests against the communist regime.

ONLINE DISSENT President Miguel Díaz-Canel quickly blamed the demonstrations on the U.S.'s “policy of economic suffocation.” Since then, police have erected checkpoints across Havana and the government has restricted access to social media and messaging apps like WhatsApp and Facebook, highlighting the critical role Internet access played in the unrest. “This couldn't have happened a few years ago,” says Paul Hare, a former British ambassador to Cuba.

POLITICAL PRIORITIES The unrest puts a spotlight on the Biden Administration's drawn-out review of U.S. Cuba policy. Although Biden promised during his campaign to “reverse the failed Trump policies” of imposing hundreds of new sanctions and economic measures on the island, there was little indication a shift was in the works until the protests erupted. As of July 20, the Biden Administration says it's reviewing an increase in embassy staff and creating a working group to reconsider remittances to the island.

QUICK FIXES Several prominent Republicans, including Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, have called for the Administration to provide Internet access to Cubans, arguing this “may be the key to finally bringing democracy to the island.” Biden has said he's reviewing whether the U.S. can do that, though experts warn that it is not a long-term strategy in the face of Cuba's growing humanitarian crisis.

—VERA BERGENGRUEN

DANISH SIDDIQUI—REUTERS

GOOD QUESTION

Will Texas Democrats' great escape impact the voting-rights fight?

CLOSE TO 60 DEMOCRATS IN THE TEXAS house flew to Washington, D.C., on July 12 to stall the passage of two GOP-backed bills that would restrict access to voting across the state. As of July 21, the lawmakers remained in the capital, having met with Vice President Kamala Harris and members of Congress to spotlight the flood of restrictive GOP-sponsored voting bills nationwide and to urge congressional action to combat them.

"We are holding the line," state representative Trey Martinez Fischer tells TIME. "If Republicans are silencing our voices here [in Texas], they'll do it anywhere in America."

The lawmakers' plan hit a snag when six tested positive for COVID-19 after arriving in D.C., forcing the group to isolate. Among them is representative Celia Israel, who had planned to get married on July 15 before her plans were derailed. "I hope this instance highlights the sacrifices we're willing to make for the cause of democracy," Israel said in a July 17 statement.

The Texas voting bills would empower partisan poll watchers, ban drive-through and 24-hour voting as well as drop boxes for mail ballots, and bar local election officials from sending out vote-by-mail applications to voters unless they are explicitly requested. Without the house Democrats

present, the state's legislature, which is in a special session, no longer has the quorum required to pass the bills, which Republicans say will help ensure election integrity.

Texas Democrats took the "nuclear option" by leaving en masse, says Brandon Rottinghaus, a political-science professor at the University of Houston. But Texas Republicans can "continue their legislative blitzkrieg after they wear the Democrats down," he adds. "They can't stay away forever." Governor Greg Abbott, who said the Democrats' decision "inflicts harm on the very Texans who elected them to serve," can continue to call as many special sessions as he wants—or needs.

President Joe Biden gave a July 13 speech on the importance of protecting voting rights, but he did not address the Senate filibuster, which currently stands in the way of passing federal voting legislation to counter the recent wave of states' restrictive voting laws. The omission irked progressives calling for decisive action. "Elected officials in Texas are now literally fleeing the state and avoiding arrest to protect voting rights," says James Slattery, an attorney with the Texas Civil Rights Project. "Isn't the most minimal thing that [U.S. Senators] can do is kill the filibuster to pass voting-rights legislation?"

Texas Democrats have said they plan to stay in Washington at least until the current special session ends in August. "I've got the largest suitcase I have in my house," Fischer says. "And I threw in extra socks." —SANYA MANSOOR; with reporting by JANELL ROSS

NEWS TICKER

England lifts COVID-19 restrictions

England has **lifted almost all lockdown restrictions and mask mandates**, declaring July 19 "Freedom Day" despite recent spikes in new COVID-19 cases. Scientists have criticized the reopening, however, arguing that the risks are still high—particularly for younger unvaccinated individuals.

Socialist wins Peru presidency

Pedro Castillo—a teachers'-union activist who has never held public office—was officially declared the **winner of Peru's presidential elections** on July 19, beating right-wing candidate Keiko Fujimori. Castillo has pledged to rewrite the country's constitution and tackle income inequality.

Ben & Jerry's boycott draws Israel's anger

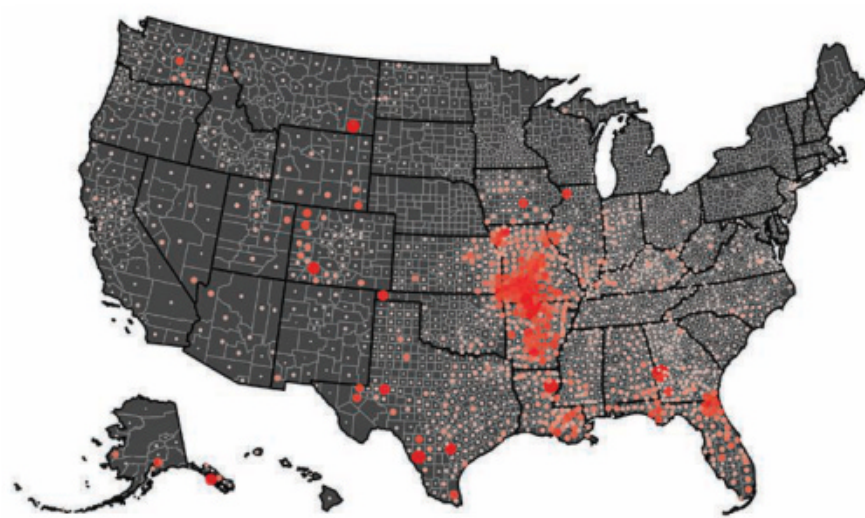
Ben & Jerry's said July 19 that it "is inconsistent with our values" for its ice cream to be sold in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Israel is now **pressuring the U.S. to enforce anti-boycott laws** against the company and has warned parent company Unilever of "severe consequences."

HEALTH

A fourth COVID-19 wave is brewing in the U.S.

In the first half of July, the number of new daily COVID-19 cases across America nearly tripled, from 13,700 on July 6 to more than 37,000 on July 20. It's a surge that harbors grim reminders of past waves in the summer and fall of 2020, but also one that looks significantly different from those we have seen before.

Even at its worst heights, the pandemic has never struck the U.S. uniformly. Instead, it wandered from urban areas to suburban and rural counties and



COVID-19 hot spots in the past two weeks

TOTAL CASES PER 100,000 RESIDENTS

0–249 250–499 500–999 1,000+

then back again. The map above shows the 14-day growth in

cases per 100,000 residents at the county level, capturing

in finer detail the variations in completed vaccination rates per state: Alabama has vaccinated just 33.9% of residents as of July 21, for example, compared with nearly 70% in Vermont. The per capita rate of new cases clusters in regions where a majority of adults remain unvaccinated. And those case rates are contingent on the numbers of people being tested for COVID-19, figures that can only underestimate the true picture. —Chris Wilson

TheBrief News

NATION

Chauvin prosecutors have new eyes on 2013 case

By Karl Vick/Minneapolis

THE PROSECUTORS WHO WON A CONVICTION for the murder of George Floyd say they are focused anew on the case of a young Black man killed by Minneapolis police in 2013. Terrance Franklin was 22 when he was shot 10 times—five times in the head—by SWAT officers in a confrontation that Franklin’s family called an execution. The officers were initially cleared of wrongdoing. In June, TIME detailed evidence that had moved the Minneapolis city council in 2020 to settle the family’s wrongful-death lawsuit, including a bystander recording that allegedly captured an officer shouting, “Come out, little n----r, don’t go putting those hands up now!” shortly before Franklin was shot.

“When I read the article, I was utterly shocked and appalled,” says Keith Ellison, the Minnesota attorney general whose office led the prosecution of former Minneapolis officer Derek Chauvin in Floyd’s murder. Interviewed on July 15

outside a northwest Minneapolis coffee shop, where he was interrupted often by well-wishers, Ellison said, “I don’t know all the evidence. I have not even listened to the tape. But I was like, ‘Wow. Wow.’”

Back in 2013, the Minneapolis police department (MPD) swiftly cleared its officers, who claimed that Franklin, a burglary suspect, was killed immediately after seizing an officer’s gun and wounding two of the five SWAT team members who confronted him in a crowded basement. The department ignored the video recorded by a bystander, the murky audio of which appears to indicate Franklin was captured and showered with racial epithets before being killed, not shot down in self-defense.

Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman has asked a state agency, the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA), to investigate the recording, as well as other evidence gathered for the family’s lawsuit. “Some of the stuff is

kind of surprising. And intriguing,” Freeman tells TIME. “The statute of limitations never runs out on homicides. So if I have new evidence, new reliable evidence, I can reopen the case and look at it again. I don’t have that yet. This needs to be investigated.

“I mean, Terrance Franklin troubled me,” Freeman adds. “The case troubles me.”

Freeman was also the local prosecutor in 2013 and effectively cleared the five officers by taking the MPD’s investigation to a grand jury, which declined to indict. In a June 14 interview, he noted that the MPD no longer

investigates itself and that grand juries (which operate in secret) no longer get police shootings. Freeman now makes the charging calls himself.

“I like to think we’ve learned some lessons,” he says. “If you saw the difference between the evaluation on Franklin and what we presented to the jury in Chauvin, I mean ...”

Ellison’s state office took the lead on Chauvin after activists decried the initial handling of the case by Freeman, already awash in criticism for declining to charge two Minneapolis officers in the 2015 death of another Black man, Jamar Clark. But Freeman’s office was an equal partner in the Chauvin trial, and Ellison and Freeman, fellow Democrats who speak well of each other, say they have discussed the Franklin case.

If the BCA confirms what Freeman calls “new evidence,” he will face the delicate task of confronting the police department that brings most of his cases. But he could also pass the case to Ellison, who says, “Some of these old cases need to be looked at ... some of these old cases are just appalling facts that need to be investigated, like Terrance Franklin.

“I’ve never prosecuted a cop,” the attorney general adds.

“Ever. I prosecute criminals. That’s who I prosecute. And if you have any doubt about it, ask the jury who was on the Chauvin case.” —With reporting by

MARIAH ESPADA



Terrance Franklin



Minnesota AG Ellison was “appalled” to read details of Franklin’s killing by police

Milestones

DIED

Kurt Westergaard, the Danish cartoonist whose 2005 cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad offended Muslims around the world, at 86, his family said on July 18.

HOSPITALIZED

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, on July 14, after more than a week of “persistent” hiccups. Following a successful intestinal procedure, he was released on July 18.

WON

Slovenian cyclist Tadej Pogacar’s second straight Tour de France title, on July 18.

GRADUATED

The first woman to complete the U.S. Navy’s Special Warfare training program, which supports the Navy SEALs and other elite teams, on July 15.

SENTENCED

Florida man Paul Hodgkins, to eight months in prison on July 19, the first person convicted of a felony for the Jan. 6 attack to be sentenced.

SELECTED

The Australian city of Brisbane as host of the 2032 Olympic Games, the International Olympic Committee announced on July 21.

RELEASED

Guantánamo Bay detainee Abdul Latif Nasser—who was never charged with a crime—on July 19 after 19 years of confinement. Nasser is the first detainee transferred out of the prison under the Biden Administration.

LAUNCHED

Jeff Bezos, the richest man in the world, into space on July 20 for a 10-minute flight aboard a rocket built by his company Blue Origin.



DIED

Gloria Richardson

THERE ARE MANY LEADERS from the civil rights era who remain all too often overlooked, despite their work carrying significant weight in the fight for racial equality. Gloria Richardson, who died on July 16 at 99, is one such figure.

Richardson was heavily involved in civil rights activism in the city of Cambridge, Md.—where she was captured in an iconic photograph (above) pushing away a rifle in the hands of a National Guardsman during a 1963 sit-in protest—and helped organize demonstrations championing issues like housing, jobs and health care access for the Black community. She has often been credited as the first woman to lead an extended grassroots movement outside of the Deep South.

“Racism is ingrained in this country,” Richardson told the *Washington Post* in 2020. “We marched until the governor called martial law. That’s when you get their attention. Otherwise, you’re going to keep protesting the same thing another 100 years from now.” —JOSIAH BATES

DIED

Biz Markie

Euphoric hip-hop iconoclast

By Ice-T

IN 1988, I WENT ON MY FIRST BIG NATIONAL TOUR, THE DOPE Jam Tour. Biz Markie and I shared a tour bus for like a hundred shows. When you’re on a tour bus and you’ve got two crews on there, you’re going to either become friends or go to war. Biz and I, we became like brothers out there on the road.

Biz, who died on July 16 at 57, was always a comedian, doing something that would keep everybody in stitches, singing “Bennie and the Jets” and his renditions of many other songs. Every time we went into town, Biz would run to the mall and buy new clothes. By the end of the tour, there was a bunk over-run with his dirty clothes. He kept fresh that way.

In the golden age of hip-hop, Biz Markie stood apart from everybody. Nobody’s style, nobody’s stage presence was close. He would create his own way of rhyming that was just so funky and so fluid. You have to be really good to rap that abstract and keep it on beat. And he was a beatboxer on top of it. He laid so many layers of what hip-hop could be for the future. Now, you see all these artists who are way out, but it was Biz who set that trend of being out there—and still being hardcore and respected by everybody in the game.

The hip-hoppers in my era would always ask: Who would you not want to go on after? We all know who had a show that could just destroy the crowd; Biz was known for that. Meanwhile, if I had to go onstage and then Biz went on after me, he would probably just rip my whole show apart. —As told to ANDREW R. CHOW

Ice-T is a rapper and actor



ENDED

Judge Judy

By Nancy Grace

LONG ON BRAINS AND short on pretense, Judge Judy Sheindlin has presided over her eponymous courtroom drama for more than two decades. While most judges are seen as living in cloistered ivory towers, Sheindlin is right there in the trenches. She’s a jurist people understand, respect and love.

Both the icon herself and her show have resonated so widely because of Sheindlin’s authenticity—and her steadfast belief that people should be held accountable for their actions. *Judge Judy* has consistently topped first-run syndication ratings; *Forbes* named Sheindlin the highest-grossing TV host in the world in 2018.

Sheindlin’s TV fame came after a long career as a prosecutor and family-court judge in New York City, and it doesn’t surprise me that she’s not slowing down now. *Judge Judy*’s final original episode, which aired July 23, may mark the end of her second act, but with a new streaming series, *Judy Justice*, set to debut in the fall, I’m prepared to be dazzled by Sheindlin’s third.

Grace is a New York Times best-selling author, publisher of CrimeOnline.com, and host of Crime Stories With Nancy Grace on Fox Nation and SiriusXM

WORLD

China's herd of wandering elephants may be climate-change migrants

By Charlie Campbell/Shanghai

IT'S A WILDLIFE EXPEDITION THAT HAS CAPTIVATED THE globe: a herd of 15 rogue elephants trekking more than 300 miles from their home in Xishuangbanna National Nature Reserve, near China's border with Laos. On their journey, they have pilfered from grain stores, scoffed mountains of corn and pineapples, and caused over \$1 million of damage as they amble slowly through farmland and villages.

The elephants' antics have been highly engaging. Millions across China—and all around the world—have followed 24-hour livestreams shot by a dozen swarming drones. One popular stream showed a calf trying to clamber out from under a snoozing adult during a group nap; another calf, trying to drink water, plunged headfirst into a pond. Particularly popular footage showed some of the herd appearing drunk after feasting on fermented grain.

The herd's odyssey began in March last year when 16 elephants were seen moving from the reserve; within a month they had reached Yuanjiang County, about 230 miles north of their starting point. Nobody is clear why the herd set out on this unprecedented trek. Some suggest environmental degradation may have spurred them; others believe they are simply lost.

Professor Josh Plotnik, an expert in elephant psychology at Hunter College, City University of New York, tells TIME that they likely left because of habitat loss and increasing human disturbance, which may have led to decreasing availability of food and water. Elephants can eat 200 kg (440 lb.) of food every day, and much of their traditional habitat near Xishuangbanna has been turned over to rubber plantations.

"The individual personalities of the elephants in this group [may have] contributed to their decision to leave," says Plotnik. "It is also likely that once the elephants got a taste for the high-quality food readily available in crop fields, such as sugarcane, they continued to seek it out."

THE HERD'S VIRAL FAME has brought a greater awareness of environmental problems to a nation that, despite great strides, remains the world's worst polluter. Conservationists are now trying to leverage that to ensure that real change can come from the elephants' plight—not least as they appear to be heading toward the city of Kunming, where China is hosting a U.N. biodiversity conference in October. (*Human-wildlife coexistence* has already been added to its agenda.)

"We cannot ignore the effect of rapid development of the local economy on the loss of wildlife habitat," Professor Zhang Li, a renowned expert on Asian elephant migration at Beijing Normal University, wrote on his Weibo page. "Clear waters and green mountains are as valuable as mountains of gold and silver. A healthy and complete ecosystem is the cornerstone of sustainable economic development."

Environmentalists are also calling for the Chinese govern-



▲
The roving herd, in China's southwestern Yunnan province, on June 20

ment to set up dedicated elephant nature reserves like the successful ones created for pandas and snow leopards. Given that the price of rubber is extremely low, buying back land from farmers is also a possibility.

China's wild elephants have doubled in number to more than 300 since the 1990s, but their habitat has shrunk by nearly two-thirds over the same period. Though China has extremely harsh penalties for those caught killing elephants, the combination of these factors means that the potential for human-elephant conflict will only rise. "We hope that elephants can recover their populations in their historic range," Becky Shu Chen, from the IUCN Asian Elephant Specialist Group, told state broadcaster CGTN. "But it's extremely challenging [for them to] coexist with people."

"The big fear is that the intensity of conflict between humans and elephants can start as just a nuisance and quickly grow to the point where people or elephants get killed," says Plotnik. "This is already happening in some countries in Asia, and spells a dire future for elephants if we don't reverse the trend." □



TECHNOLOGY

How one company refused to let cyberattackers win

By Patrick Lucas Austin

IN MARCH 2019, THE DAY AFTER HILDE Merete Aasheim was appointed CEO of Norsk Hydro, an aluminum and renewable-energy production company that produces enough energy in Norway for 900,000 homes per year, she received a call at 4 a.m. “We are under a severe cyberattack. You have to come to work,” Aasheim recalls a colleague on the other end of the line telling her. “This is not a drill.”

Critical infrastructure systems around the globe have become a favorite target of hacker organizations. Last May’s attack on Colonial Pipeline, a major oil provider on the East Coast of the U.S., showed not only how brittle corporate cybersecurity standards can be but also that integral businesses can potentially be extorted into paying ransoms. (Colonial Pipeline paid the attackers \$4.4 million, though much of the money was later recovered by the U.S. government.)

But paying a ransom “offers no assurance that a victim organization will regain access to their data or have their stolen data returned,” says Eric Goldstein, executive assistant director for cybersecurity at the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), which assists companies caught up in ransomware incidents. “Ransomware

is a criminal economy—and as long as victims are paying ransom, we can expect these criminal groups to be further incentivized to conduct ongoing attacks.”

The attack against Hydro infected its global network of nearly 3,000 computers and encrypted key areas of the company’s IT network. It stalled production in most of its manufacturing facilities. But paying the hackers to regain access could have left the company with a compromised system—and receptive to another attack. “There was never the option to pay any ransom,” says Aasheim. So Hydro shut down its network and took up the task of removing the virus from the equation altogether.

Hydro switched over to manual operations for its most critical systems, relying on pen and paper and faxes to track its manufacturing and finances. Printed order forms, sticky notes on doors and blank computer screens, hours of manual labor and bookkeeping, helped keep the most essential orders fulfilled until computer access could be restored—partially—for mission-critical work.

Manual production is by no means an optimal solution, but it is better than

a full shutdown of production facilities. Still, the incident cost Hydro an estimated \$70 million, according to its 2019 fourth-quarter earnings report.

To combat the attackers, meanwhile, Hydro CIO Jo De Vlieghe, along with agencies including Microsoft’s cybersecurity response team and the Norwegian National Cyber Security Centre, set up teams to investigate the virus corruption and rebuild the network. That meant inspecting the accounts of more than 30,000 employees and even more service accounts. Essential systems, like manufacturing-specific software, had to be rebuilt over the course of about three weeks. Restarting other systems, including the company’s user directory, took as long as three months.

Rob Lee, CEO of cybersecurity firm Dragos, praised Hydro’s handling of the situation: “It was just extraordinarily transparent. If you’re impacting the public or the supply chain, it helps quell a lot of concerns and it’s just really a good practice.”

Still, with the risk to the actual hackers being minimal—no one was arrested for the Hydro attack—and ransom payouts rising, it’s a constant effort to stay ahead.

“If a competent hacker really wants to get into a company, they will succeed no matter what,” says De Vlieghe. “We need to be perfect all the time. They just need to be lucky once, and sooner or later they might be lucky again.” □

‘Cyber-security and cyber risk has to be on the top of the strategic agenda.’

HILDE MERETE AASHEIM,
Norsk Hydro CEO

Author and activist **Heather McGhee** is on a quest to end America's zero-sum thinking on race

By **Alana Semuels**

HEATHER MCGHEE WAS COOKING DINNER IN her Brooklyn apartment in January as she opened a YouTube link to watch Joe Biden deliver his first speech on race as the President. As she bustled around the kitchen, Biden recited a line that seemed so familiar that she nearly dropped her wineglass. “We’ve bought the view that America is a zero-sum game in many cases: ‘If you succeed, I fail,’” Biden said. But, he continued, “When any one of us is held down, we’re all held back.”

McGhee’s first book, *The Sum of Us*, was about to hit shelves in February, and she’d shared copies of it with some Biden advisers. The book argues that Americans have been fed a “zero-sum story” that says progress for people of color will take away what white Americans already have. “The logical extension of the zero-sum story is that a future without racism is something white people should fear, because there will be nothing good for them in it,” she writes. McGhee uses the book to explain that racism actually costs all Americans, by allowing wealthy conservatives to take away resources from all of us.

McGhee had worried that *The Sum of Us*, coming after the death of George Floyd and the country’s reckoning with race, was being published too late. But as Biden spoke, she realized it might be coming at exactly the right time. There, in her kitchen, she heard the President of the United States—an older white man—telling Americans that they shouldn’t fear the success of Black people, using some of the very phrases she had used in her book. “I was like, ‘What is happening?! This is amazing!’” McGhee says.

For her book, McGhee journeyed around the nation, interviewing people to illustrate how that zero-sum game hurts everyone. She goes to Montgomery, Ala., where in 1959, white citizens decided to drain the public pool rather than integrate it. The same thing has happened as the U.S. has gotten more diverse, she argues; rather than share the benefits of government with Black people, many white Americans have sought to end benefits for everyone. This history helped answer a question she’d been asking for a long time: Why doesn’t America have well-funded schools, good wages for everyone and low-cost health care?

FROM THE BEDROOM of the apartment she shares with her husband, a documentary filmmaker, and

MCGHEE QUICK FACTS

Home turf

She spent her childhood in an apartment on Chicago’s South Side that her great-grandmother Flossie McGhee bought in a land-sale contract.

Education

McGhee received a law degree from UC Berkeley in 2009 and briefly pursued a career in television writing before working at Demos.

Performing arts

McGhee studied theater at Yale and is also a performance artist; she appeared in *Timelining* at the Guggenheim Museum in 2015.

their 3-year-old son, McGhee says she didn’t always dwell on race. Growing up in Chicago and attending all-Black schools, and then studying at a boarding school in a small Massachusetts town, McGhee knew that being Black meant she wasn’t as privileged as many of her classmates. But she attributed those differences to inherent problems with the economy.

Until 2018, McGhee worked to address inequality in the U.S. economy for nearly two decades at Demos, a left-leaning think tank she ran starting in 2014. She led campaigns to regulate financial institutions and cancel student debt. It was during her work presenting debt research to Congress that she overheard a man in a Senate office ranting about “deadbeats” who had babies with multiple women and then avoided child support. She began to wonder whether her focus on economics was obscuring something else: that coded racial stereotypes were stalling efforts by progressives to enact changes in Congress. “We went from an era of shared prosperity to the era of inequality. Why would the country have done that to itself?” she said to me. “It didn’t feel like the economics orthodoxy had an answer.”

As she traveled the country researching her book, McGhee found the answer. People in power turned white, Black and brown people against one another, telling them that one group’s success would come at the expense of another. As a result, white people stopped supporting the government programs that enabled their prosperity as soon as access was expanded to Black people. In California, voters passed Proposition 13 in 1978, which limited property-tax increases, so they wouldn’t have to pay for “other people’s children” and immigrants from Mexico. A 2017 union drive at a Nissan plant in Mississippi was gaining steam until many of the white workers pulled their support, more comfortable with seeing themselves allied with white management than with Black co-workers.

This pattern ends up hurting everyone, as Black families become the canaries in the coal mine, hurt by destructive policies that soon entrap the rest of America. Years after California voted to lower property taxes, funding had



plummeted for all public schools, and tuition for state colleges and universities had risen fourfold. Black and white workers at Nissan and other non-unionized places make less than their unionized counterparts.

In the course of writing the book, McGhee began to understand that the economic issues that had always interested her as a kid—like why there were people asking for money on the street?—were at their heart about race. In a white classmate's boast of being "socially liberal but fiscally conservative," she detected inherent stereotypes about whether Black people were deserving of the things white Americans had received for years. "For me, the transformation that happened was from seeing race as kind of an accelerator of

inequality to seeing it as a driver of inequality," she says.

McGhee found exceptions—people and places who were trying to create racial solidarity; she still thinks about them today. There's Bridget Hughes, a white fast-food worker in Kansas City, Mo., who had thought immigrants were stealing Americans' jobs, until she went to a Fight for \$15 meeting and saw herself in a Latina mother also trying to raise a family on fast-food wages. There's Bruce Noddin, a white resident of Lewiston, Maine, who connected with the local Muslim community while in a drug-addiction recovery program and started organizing a cross-cultural festival alongside Somali refugees.

"Connecting with someone, or seeing yourself in someone, is the antidote to a phenomenon that is, in some ways, destroying America," she told me. "We need to shift people to say, 'We've found the enemy, and it's not each other.'"

THESE DAYS, McGhee's morning begins with fighting with her 3-year-old son to put on pants and continues with three or four public appearances on Zoom, part of an ongoing virtual book tour. The pandemic has made her work accessible to more audiences who have time to attend an event online.

So far, reception has been positive, she says, perhaps because the type of person who will attend a Zoom book event on racism is the type of person who wants to do something about it. She's already signed on to write another book focusing on solutions with her mother, Gail Christopher, who works to help people foster cross-racial relationships. She is launching a podcast, supported by the Obamas' production company, which has bought the TV and film rights to her book.

McGhee is cautiously optimistic that the current Administration wants to help all Americans while still tailoring some policies to address historical wrongs: the American Rescue Plan, for example, provided billions of dollars for Black farmers to address systemic racism. There is more room for solutions now, she says, with a President who acknowledges America's racist past, rather than adding to it. □

'We need to shift people to say, "We've found the enemy, and it's not each other.'"

HEATHER MCGHEE, on how to build stronger communities in America

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The View

WORLD

WHAT HAITI NEEDS MOST

By Dimitry Elias Léger

When Jovenel Moïse, a deeply unpopular President of Haiti, was assassinated on July 7 by a squad of gunmen posing as DEA agents, the news stunned and horrified the world. As Haiti has descended into chaos, with calls for U.S. intervention, the world should consider the leadership vacuum this murder creates to be a vital opportunity. ▶

INSIDE

THE ESCALATING CYBERWAR
BETWEEN THE U.S. AND CHINA

WHY THE MEAT
WE EAT MATTERS

TheView Opener

Most Haitians shrugged off the news and braced themselves for the worst, while praying the violence that has plagued their lives the past few years will not be exponentially increased by the violence of losing their freedom to foreign forces.

The drumbeat of news of brutal killings and kidnappings of neighbors and friends, priests and commoners, and children and cops has become routine in Haiti since 2018, when an unforeseen spike in gas prices triggered protests against the Moïse government. Over the past three years, gang-related violence has reached a fever pitch of terrorism and opportunistic crimes.

By this summer, many parents of means began sending their kids to live with relatives in New York City, Miami, Paris and Montreal, and enrolling them in schools in those cities for the coming academic year, as they sought business and career opportunities on new shores. The last people Haiti could afford to lose were following the international community in bailing out on Haiti. Both in 2018 and 2019, I myself was evacuated from Haiti by U.N. security after violent protests broke out and made getting any missionary work done impossible. The U.N. eventually gave up on Haiti after nearly 15 years, probably a decade after Haitians had given up on the U.N. The hope for peace and prosperity it represented was snuffed out.

Moïse's death is the culmination of years of lawlessness, frustration and hopelessness in Haiti. Call it Peak Failed State. But President Biden can chart a new, richer direction for U.S.-Haiti relations, if he plays this moment constructively. Calls for Biden to send in U.S. troops to broker peace between the government and the gangsters and pave the way for elections are misguided and far too shortsighted. Washington has alternated between punishing Haitian leaders with cruel embargoes and humiliating Haitians with military takeovers since the country was founded almost 220 years ago. Washington shouldn't try using U.N. peacekeepers to serve as front men and a pacifying force in Haiti

either. Haiti's criminals, both white and blue collar, spent the duration of the most recent U.N. peacekeeping mission in Haiti gorging on profits from the economic bubble created by the U.N. and, sadly enough, sending most of those profits abroad.

IT IS TIME for Washington and other would-be friends of Haiti to try a new approach to helping Haiti develop. Focus on the economy, guys. Every future Haitian President will be a dead man or woman walking after a year, like Moïse and his predecessors, if the economy doesn't bring tangible improvements to Haitian lives. The success of Haiti's economy will enhance and protect its democracy and the careers of its politicians and policymakers. After all,



Supporters of slain President Jovenel Moïse gather around a memorial in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on July 14

the most common knock against Haiti is that it's the poorest country in the very wealthy western hemisphere. But being poor in a rich neighborhood is not a sin. It's a launching pad.

Having rich neighbors like the U.S., Canada and the Bahamas, and a successful sibling like the Dominican Republic, the country Haiti shares the island of Hispaniola with, is a boon to Haiti. Unlike Afghanistan (No. 169) and the African nations in the bottom 40 of the U.N.'s Human Development Index—which ranks countries annually after measuring their citizens' average life expectancies, years of schooling and gross national income, among other factors—Haiti (No. 170 out of 189 countries) is a mere two-hour flight to the 17th most developed nation in the world (the U.S.), a

good swim from the 58th (the Bahamas) and can move goods by truck to the 88th (the Dominican Republic).

Make no mistake, the news of the President's assassination stuns and terrifies Haitians. If Biden wants to intervene constructively in the lives of the 11 million in Haiti, whose empty stomachs can't be filled by ballots, he must offer better trade relations with the U.S. and prepare an economic-stimulus plan to develop Haiti in partnership with the Dominican Republic, Haiti's business community, and sustainable-development engineers and farmers. Haiti has good assets to pump cash into: perfect beaches and weather all year round for tourism; thriving arts, entertainment and literature that annually produce some of the best novelists,

musicians and filmmakers in the francophone world and the U.S.; agriculture; gold mining; and a multilingual workforce.

What Haiti has always lacked are good neighbors and fair-trading partners other than Cuba, Brazil and Venezuela. With a terrible stroke of his pen, President Clinton destroyed Haiti's rice-exporting industry with surprise tariffs. Subsequently, Haiti has had to import rice from Arkansas, among other places. Biden can change that pattern with trade policies that aim to get the Haitian economy back on its feet sustainably and get millions of Haitians working.

Haitians have been protesting for the same kind of freedom since 2018. I'd argue Haitians have been asking Washington to similarly respect and honor our passion for freedom and economic sovereignty since 1804, when Haiti forcefully rejected slavery and Napoleon's rule, despite generating half of France's GDP with its productivity.

Back then, the U.S. responded to Haitian calls for dignity and commonwealth-building with embargoes or military dominance. Biden can become the first U.S. President to truly support Haiti's clarion calls for freedom.

Léger is the author of the novel God Loves Haiti and a former adviser to U.N. missions in Africa and Haiti

THE RISK REPORT

China and the U.S. wrestle for control over cyberspace

By Ian Bremmer



ON JULY 19, THE White House accused the Chinese government of supporting a hacking operation, revealed in March, targeting Microsoft

Exchange Server software. The view from the U.S. intelligence community is that Chinese state security played a role in illegally accessing email services on a server used by governments and some of the world's biggest companies, including military contractors. The Biden Administration also accuses China of hiring "criminal contract hackers who carry out both state-sponsored activities and cybercrime."

Though the Administration's response doesn't appear to include the sorts of sanctions that have been imposed on Russia, a far less important commercial rival than China, its statement featured considerably stronger language about China's pattern of "irresponsible and destabilizing" behavior in cyberspace, behavior unworthy of a country with pretensions to global leadership. The White House knows that comment will draw a prickly response from Chinese officials.

Unlike Donald Trump, President Biden showed up for this fight with China backed by lots of friends. In fact, Washington has the backing of every member of the G-7 and NATO, a group that includes nations traditionally reluctant to criticize the Chinese government too aggressively. These allies are mostly unwilling to contemplate sanctions against China, at least at this point, and the E.U. says only that the latest attacks came from Chinese territory rather than explicitly calling them state-backed. But the White House statement made the point that the Biden Administration is working actively toward a common cyberapproach. There's no question that the joint statements from the E.U., U.K., Japan, Canada, Australia and New Zealand will confirm Chinese suspi-

cions that Biden means to divide Europe and allies from China where possible and to build broad technology alliances with an eye to confronting China's bid to set new rules in cyberspace.

CYBERESPIONAGE IS a fast-growing threat. Among the world's most powerful countries, each government knows that an attack on the critical infrastructure of another invites retaliation. China can attack the U.S., but its leaders know the U.S. can hit back. That's why most of the action in cyberspace among cybersophisticated nations is focused on stealing secrets and intellectual property. The bad news is that there are no enforceable rules that limit a government's ability to share its cybertools with outside actors like hackers.

The ransomware charge that the Biden Administration has leveled at China is serious. In 2020 alone, the total known cost of cybercrime was over \$1 trillion in global losses, more than double the costs in 2018. Hospitals have also faced a surge in ransom-

ware attacks.

For now, no warning from Washington, coordinated with allies or not, will halt Chinese hacking operations. The scale of cyberthreats is growing, and Biden hasn't found the right combination of carrots and sticks to make much difference. The Administration promises "further actions to hold [China] accountable." That leaves future sanctions on the table.

For now, the Chinese have lost significant face. They'll respond with statements that remind Washington and the world that the U.S. doesn't always behave "responsibly" in cyberspace either. Beijing will also threaten some of the other countries that joined the U.S. condemnation, including by warning of less access to the Chinese marketplace for their companies.

The clear message from all this is that the U.S.-China rivalry is escalating, and no one has yet figured out a way to slow the momentum. □

No warning from Washington, coordinated with allies or not, will halt Chinese hacking operations

THE LEADERSHIP BRIEF

The meat problem

Ethan Brown, the chief executive officer of Beyond Meat, a leading player in plant-based meat, believes that the drought in the American West will help raise awareness of the climate impact of what we eat. Says Brown: "I can't help but hope that people are drawing the connection between the temperatures that they're feeling and the drought that's occurring and their food choices, particularly the center-of-the-plate protein. I spent the weekend with my son and his high school basketball team outside of Phoenix, and it was so hot that homeless people were on the edge of the road begging for cold water. It was out of some sort of apocalyptic scene. For agricultural practices that are heavily reliant on water and the inefficient use of water, there has to be change, and I think people are starting to realize that."

Still, Brown is cognizant that people have strong feelings about beef. "It's a difficult thing to tell someone that what they're eating and what they're doing may not be the best thing. [T]he consumption of meat is so ingrained in our society, and it's so tightly tied to perceptions of who we are."

—Eben Shapiro

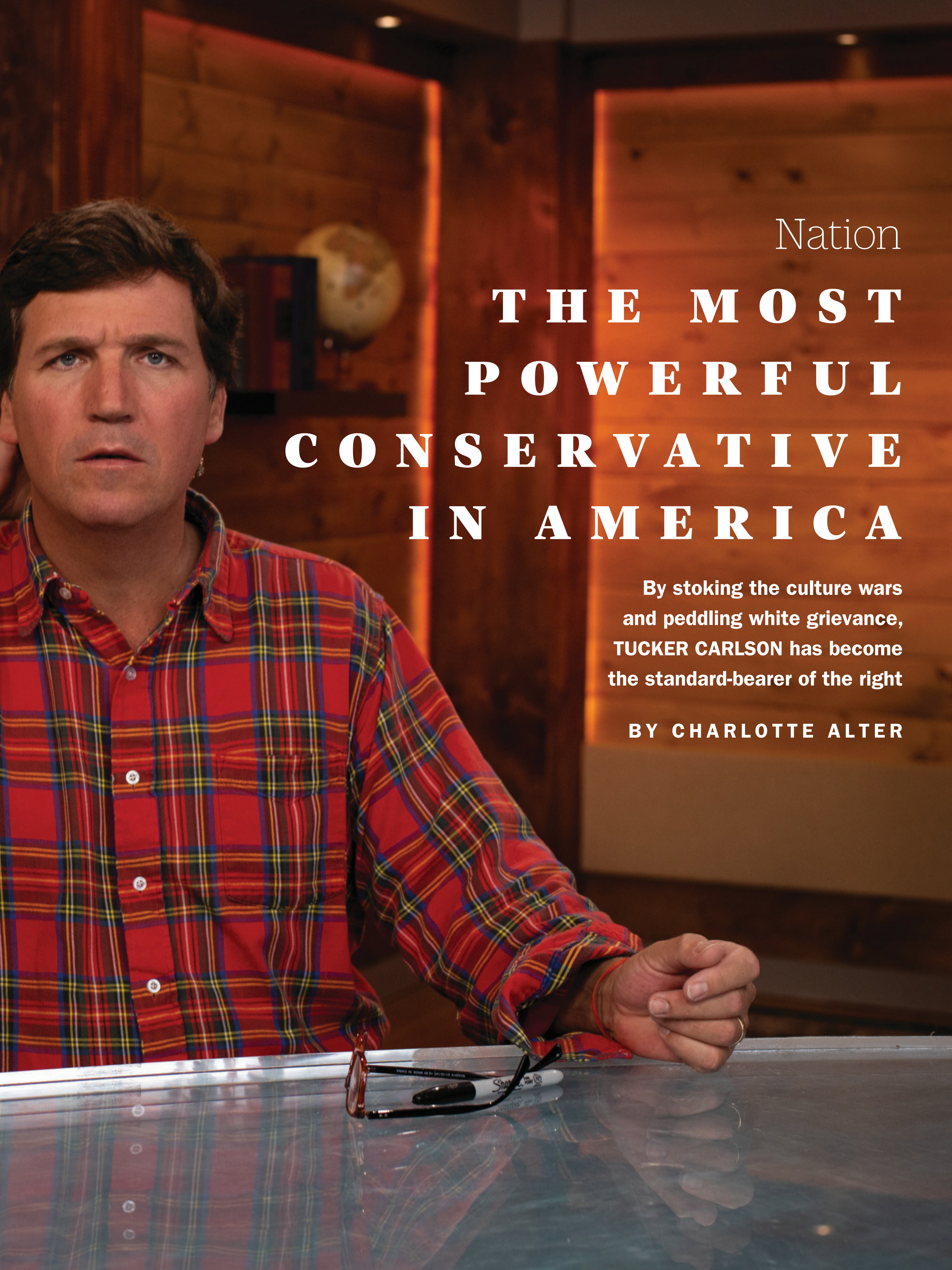
Ethan Brown, CEO of Beyond Meat





*On the set of his
daytime show, Tucker
Carlson Today, at his
studio in Maine on
June 30*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
GILLIAN LAUB FOR TIME

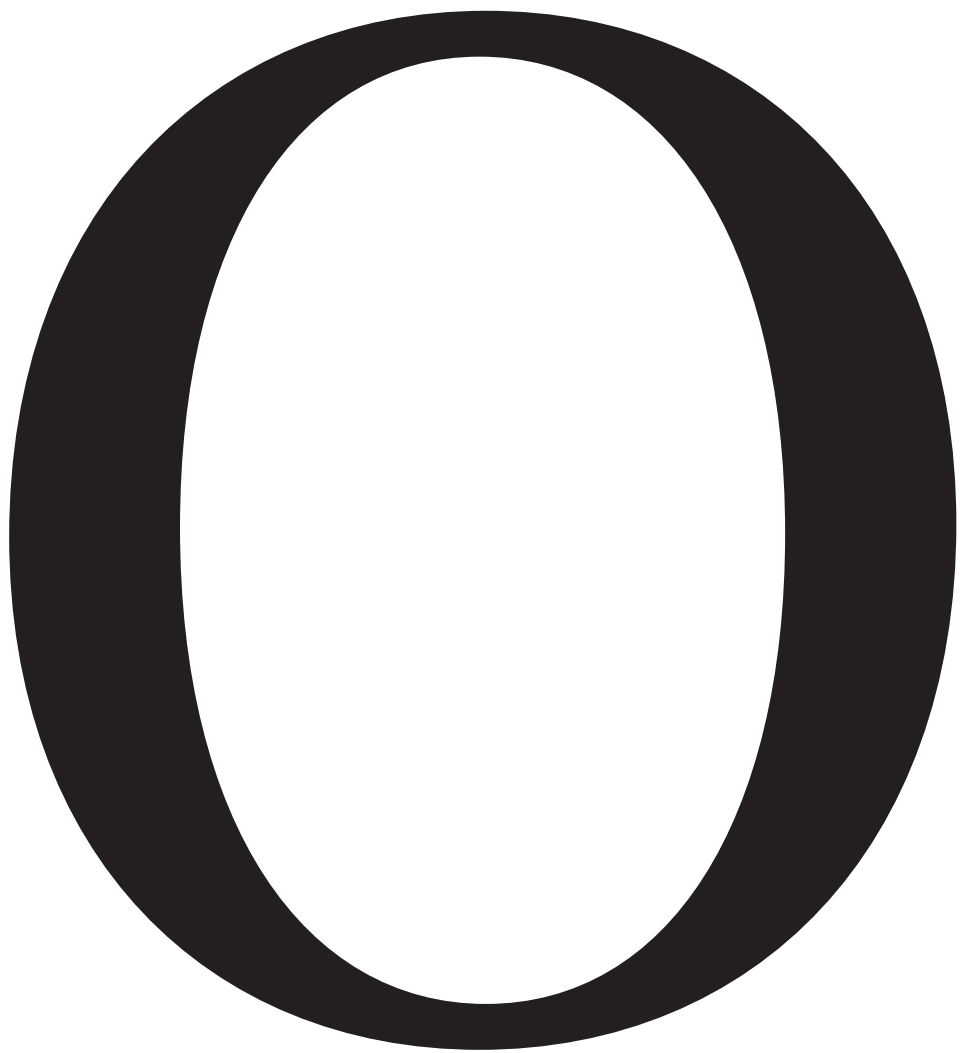


Nation

THE MOST POWERFUL CONSERVATIVE IN AMERICA

By stoking the culture wars
and peddling white grievance,
TUCKER CARLSON has become
the standard-bearer of the right

BY CHARLOTTE ALTER



ON A THURSDAY AFTERNOON IN JUNE, FIVE MONTHS AFTER Inauguration Day, I asked Tucker Carlson whether Joe Biden was the legitimately elected President of the United States.

This was halfway through a meandering phone conversation—me in my apartment in New York, he at his home in Maine—in which I spent most of the time trying to get a word in edgewise. Carlson paused. “What do you mean by ‘legitimately elected’?”

Did Biden win the election? I asked again.

“He did win the election,” Carlson said, his voice rising. “Do I think the election was fair? Obviously it wasn’t.” He ticked off a bunch of reasons he believed this: media bias, tech censorship of right-wing outlets, a shortage of voter-ID laws. I asked whether any of this resulted in determinative changes in vote counts, knowing that Donald Trump’s own Department of Homeland Security and Attorney General found no evidence of widespread fraud.

“Oh, I have no idea,” Carlson said, in an aw-shucks kind of way. “I’ve never said that. No one’s ever proved that. I don’t know if it’s provable.” But that was incidental to what seemed to be his larger point: “This weird insistence on pretending the election was fair when everyone knows that it wasn’t, even people who are happy about the outcome, is part of a much larger ritual that makes me very uncomfortable,” he said. “You’re required to say things that everyone knows aren’t true, but you’re punished if you don’t say them. It’s like a religious ritual.”

By this point, my head was spinning. This is Tuckerism in miniature: he sanitizes and legitimizes right-wing conspiratorial thinking, dodges when you try to nail him down on the specifics, then wraps it all in an argument about censorship and free speech. He has a way of talking about culture and politics that is rooted in defiance: defiance of elites, defiance of the federal government, defiance of scientific consensus. And it has won him the loyalty of millions of Americans who are already

suspicious of everything he questions.

As of July, *Tucker Carlson Tonight* is the highest-rated show on cable, averaging about 3 million viewers a night, according to Nielsen, far outstripping his rivals who appear on CNN and MSNBC at the same time. In October of last year, Carlson had the highest monthly viewership of any show in cable-news history. He’s recently expanded into daytime TV, with *Tucker Carlson Today* on Fox Nation, the network’s digital streaming service. Seth Weathers, founder of BringAmmo.com, an online retailer that sells right-wing merchandise, reports that demand for Carlson-themed T-shirts and mugs has spiked: he’s already sold five times as much Carlson merchandise in 2021 as he did in 2020. “Our Tucker stuff is actually selling more than our Trump stuff,” he said.

Right now Carlson may be the most powerful conservative in America. “No one carries more weight in Republican and conservative politics—no one—than Tucker Carlson,” said Jeff Roe, a Republican strategist who managed Ted Cruz’s 2016 presidential campaign. “He doesn’t react to the agenda, he drives the agenda. He’s the gold standard for Republican philosophy.”

That “philosophy” is less of an ideology and more of a posture. Carlson has mastered the Trumpian mathematics of outrage—the more outlandish his rhetoric, the more vehement the backlash, the more formidable he becomes. Consider the controversies he has sparked and survived over the past four years. Carlson has referenced the white-supremacist “replacement” conspiracy theory—which claims elites are planning to replace white Christian voters with non-white immigrants—by name on his show,



Carlson is the highest-rated TV host on cable news, reaching roughly 3 million viewers a night



making him a hero to many white nationalists. He suggested that American “anti-white mania” could lead to a situation comparable to the Rwandan genocide. He repeatedly argued—contrary to official findings—that George Floyd died of a drug overdose, then questioned Derek Chauvin’s conviction for Floyd’s murder. He has compared making kids wear masks outdoors to “child abuse.” Yet even as major brands like Disney and Lexus pulled millions of advertising dollars

‘You’re required to say things that everyone knows aren’t true, but you’re punished if you don’t say them.’

—Tucker Carlson

from his show, his hold on Fox’s conservative audience remained absolute. (A Fox News spokeswoman notes that as of the past quarter of this year, Carlson had 150 advertisers.)

Carlson is so influential that his show can even ruffle feathers in the upper echelons of the national-security establishment. He recently claimed that a “whistle-blower” inside the National Security Agency told him that his electronic communications were being monitored

in order to take his show off the air (because, he said, he was attempting to set up an interview with Vladimir Putin). The allegation prompted an extremely rare denial from the tight-lipped agency, which called the claim “untrue.” (The Fox News spokeswoman pointed me toward a statement given to Axios: “We support any of our hosts pursuing interviews and stories free of government interference.”)

“He was sort of an untouchable,” according to Joseph Azam, a former executive at News Corp, another company in Rupert Murdoch’s media empire, “because of the signal that touching him would send to the viewers that Fox never wants to lose. If you touch Tucker, you’re succumbing to the radical left. If you touch Tucker, you’re succumbing to cancel culture.” Azam left News Corp partly over differences around handling rhetoric like Carlson’s.

He has strengthened his hold on the conservative mind at a moment when most of the right’s elected leaders have been dethroned. The Senate’s top Republican, Mitch McConnell, has lost the GOP majority there, House minority leader Kevin McCarthy is fumbling to corral a fragmented caucus, and Trump has lost both the White House and his social media megaphone. When I asked Carlson why Republicans had lost their grip on the federal government, he was unsparing. “First of all, they’re inept and bad at governing,” he said. “The party is much more effective as an oppositional force than it is as a governing party.”

Culture has supplanted policy as the central organizing principle of American conservatism, and Carlson has emerged as the leader of that oppositional force. His brand of grievance is considerably slicker than the former President’s but similar in its appeal to disparate corners of the conservative universe. He peddles conspiracy theories that thrill the paranoid base, economic populism to workers who feel ignored by billionaires, and anti-antiracism to white people who feel judged by progressive activists. Instead of Trumpian boasting, Carlson insists he’s just asking questions. What makes Carlson “awesome,” according to Turning Point USA founder Charlie Kirk, is that “he’s unafraid to kind of ask things that are on people’s minds that might be Orwellian thought crimes, that you’re not allowed to

say and you’re not allowed to talk about.”

It has made him the top general in the war against Americans’ sense of shared reality. He throws kerosene on the controversies that divide the nation. He rejects science, history and even video evidence. Tuckerism is a mindset that gains its strength from perceived oppression, a voice that becomes louder the more you try to reason with it. Or as Carlson put it to me: “The truer something is, the more penalized you are for articulating it.”

IF YOU ALREADY love or despise him, there probably aren’t many biographical facts I can tell you about Carlson that you don’t already know. He is, at 52, the human embodiment of white contrarianism, the patron saint of golf dads. The details of Carlson’s winding journey through American media—how he married his high school sweetheart, how Jon Stewart once humiliated him on live TV, how he used to be the token conservative on CNN and MSNBC, how he co-founded the conservative website the Daily Caller, how he used to wear a bow tie but now doesn’t, how he used to drink but now doesn’t, how he used to follow conventional standards of journalistic practice but now doesn’t—have been exhaustively cataloged by fellow journalists who have spent years asking, “What happened to Tucker Carlson?”

What happened to Carlson is less important than what happened to the American right. The years since Carlson took over Bill O’Reilly’s coveted Fox News 8 p.m. slot in 2017 have been defined by few Republican policy wins but lots of drama. The Trump Administration was always more about grievance than

governing. Now the crusades on the right have shifted even further from the political realm and into the cultural: from “free speech” to “cancel culture” to critical race theory (CRT). “The culture war—that is the new political war,” said Kirk. “It’s less about ‘Democrats bad’ and ‘Republicans good,’ and it’s more like, ‘What do we believe and why do we believe it?’”

What Carlson seems to believe is that anytime the “ruling class” agrees on something—that racism creates unfairness in American life, that masks and vaccines stop the spread of COVID-19, that Jan. 6 was an attempt to subvert the democratic process—you should suspect the opposite. To Carlson, objectivity is conformity, and conformity is cowardice. The more authoritative the facts, the more skeptical he becomes.

His rants sometimes have a grain of truth to them—more often than his critics would like to admit. Or, more specifically: there are kernels of fact within the miasma of misdirection. He does sometimes tell outright falsehoods—like his bizarre claim that “FBI operatives were organizing the attack on the Capitol”—but Carlson is often more careful than other right-wing hosts to avoid assertions that are factually disprovable, instead sticking to innuendo. While he never, for example, booked Trump’s fiction-spewing lawyer Sidney Powell on his show when she was making the rounds on Fox News last year, he did raise questions that fueled conspiratorial suspicions of an unfair election. “The people now telling us to stop asking questions about voting machines are the same ones who claim that our phones weren’t listening to us,” he said in a November segment. “They lie.”

And unlike many others in conservative media, Carlson was not a pure Trump booster. For all his pugnacity, Hannity rarely punches to the right, preferring to praise anybody wrapped in the cloak of MAGA. But Carlson projects a “pox on both houses” attitude that gives him credibility with his populist fan base. “Tucker is not afraid to wield power and hold Republican politicians accountable,” said a source who’s worked closely with him but who was not authorized to speak publicly. “Because of that, Republicans are wary of crossing Tucker.” According to Politico, Carlson told multiple people—perhaps jokingly—that he voted for Kanye West

‘They are believing the absolute mess that Tucker Carlson is feeding them. And he knows, but he doesn’t take responsibility for that.’

—Elle Kalisz, formerly of Gen Z GOP



instead of Trump in 2020.

Carlson devoted portions of his 2018 book, *Ship of Fools*, to exploring how U.S. corporations have paid lip service to progressive ideas while continuing to ship jobs overseas. He has praised Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren's policies as "economic patriotism." During our call, he made a compelling argument that elites have abandoned workers—one that would likely win nods from Americans on the left as well as the right.

But then just as quickly, he pivoted to argue that the "ruling class" had conspired to focus on racial inequality as a means to deflect from class inequality. "The way we're thinking about these problems is false, and that's by design," he told me. "And the more time we spend arguing about *Latin* vs. *Latinx*, or whatever the f-ck it's called, the less time we're talking about the carried-interest loophole, or the 15,000 other ways that a tiny group of people are looting the country."

Did he really believe American elites, most of them white, had hatched a plan for a reckoning on racial injustice as a way to increase their power? When I pressed him, he insisted he didn't mean it was actually a "conspiracy." Just, maybe, sort of one. "I think it was a conspiracy of shared interest and temperament," he explained.

This distinction may be lost on some

Carlson's studio is decorated with awards, antiques and photos—one with the Grateful Dead's Jerry Garcia

of his viewers. Much of his commentary traces a narrative similar to those you might read on QAnon message boards, minus the lurid fantasies of body doubles or child exploitation: Tuckerism is about resisting a shadowy group of elites conspiring against hardworking Americans, the corrupt establishment colluding to brainwash the masses, the plot to control what people think and say.

And viewers seem to interpret his rhetoric as legitimizing their thinking. After he name-checked the "replacement" conspiracy theory on his show, the anti-immigration website VDare called it "one of the best things Fox News has ever aired." Andrew Anglin, founder of the neo-Nazi website the Daily Stormer, has called Carlson "literally our greatest ally."

I asked Carlson if it bothered him that white supremacists seemed to love him so much. "I've never met a white supremacist in my entire life," he said. "According to Joe Biden they're everywhere," he joked. "Maybe I'm surrounded by them and don't know about it."

In 2020, Carlson's former head writer Blake Neff resigned after his racist and

sexist screeds on online message boards were revealed; Carlson addressed the scandal on air, saying it was "wrong to attack people for qualities they cannot control," and the network condemned the posts as "horrendous and deeply offensive" in a statement. "I'm often accused of having those politics. Those are the opposite of my politics," Carlson insisted to me. "I want a far less race-conscious America."

But he seemed to be primarily outraged by the rhetoric condemning white supremacy. "The never-ending attacks on 'white supremacists,' 'white nationalists,' 'white this,' 'white that'—what effect is that going to have?" he said. "I don't want to live in a country where your race is the most important thing about you. That is a dead end. It never ends well." This was shortly after President Biden had given a speech condemning racist violence on the 100th anniversary of the Tulsa massacre.

"If he got up there and said, you know, 'The problem is the Blacks' or 'the Asians' or 'the Jews,' we'd be like, 'What! No! You can't talk that way, that's horrible.' What effect is this gonna have on people?" he said, getting increasingly animated. "You think there won't be a backlash to that? You think this isn't making people radical in bad ways? Oh yes it is."

NEAR THE END of our call, I asked Carlson if he'd been vaccinated against COVID-19. He paused. "Because I'm a polite person, I'm not going to ask you any supervulgar personal questions like that."

I told him he was welcome to ask me whatever he wanted.

"That's like saying, 'Do you have HIV?'" he said. "How about 'None of your business?'" He broke into a cackle, like a hyena let loose in Brooks Brothers. "I mean, are you serious? What's your favorite sexual position and when did you last engage in it?" (This has become his go-to line when asked whether he's been vaccinated; Carlson offered the same retort to Ben Smith of the *New York Times*.)

For someone who talks a lot about the right to ask questions, Carlson never did give me a straight answer. But he did find a way to drive the conversation back to his core theme: "I think there are systems in place that censor people for challenging the people in power," he said. "It's expressed as a kind of religious mania: hunt down the heretics. How dare you defend

Nation

Beethoven, or math, or Dr. Seuss or whatever. But to focus on them is to miss the point, which is, this is no longer a free country.”

The resistance to people who “tell you what to say” is woven through many of his show’s segments, whether the topic is race, the coronavirus or the election outcome. It’s a rhetorical trick that allows him to attack anybody who disagrees with him as a mindless conformist. When Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley—a burly white war veteran—testified in Congress that he thought it made sense to educate himself about CRT and was curious about the “white rage” that led to the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol, Carlson called him a “pig” and “stupid.” “Feed him a script and he will read it,” he said.

Carlson used to invite progressive guests on his show, if only to try to pummel them. Lately he’s mostly stuck to Republicans and right-wing provocateurs. “If I had to bet, most of this is performance for an audience,” said Christopher Hahn, a liberal pundit who appeared frequently on Carlson’s show until about two years ago. “I think that having lost shows in the past—like his show on CNN—probably has made him feel like ‘I’m going to stay relevant no matter what it takes.’”

Others say they once felt they could find common ground with Carlson, but no more. “I think he’s interested in propelling the propaganda that he wants to propel,” said New York City public advocate Jumaane Williams, a progressive who has appeared several times on Carlson’s show but not in recent years. “Truth is not particularly important to that.”

Unsurprisingly, the source who has worked with Carlson has a different explanation. “He recognizes that you have to be a survivor to be in TV. You can’t apologize in a society that doesn’t forgive,” the person said. “He knows this is the last time he’ll have a megaphone this big, so he wants to use it.”

That megaphone doesn’t seem to be going away anytime soon. “Tucker Carlson is an important voice in America which deeply resonates with millions of viewers,” said the Fox spokeswoman. “We fully support him.”

I asked Carlson why he thought his show occupied this unique space in the conservative ecosystem. “I wound up

working at the last mass medium where you can say pretty much whatever you want, and that’s true, and I think my show is evidence that that’s true,” he said. “And they don’t ever tell you what to say.”

DESPITE SPECULATION THAT he would make a formidable presidential contender, Carlson scoffs at the idea. “That seems like the unhappiest job you could have,” he said. “I just don’t have any ambitions like that. I have zero interest in being loved by people I don’t know.”

He didn’t have much to say when I asked whether he thought the 45th President should run again. “Oh, I don’t know,” he said, as if he was bored even thinking about it. Enthusiasm for Trump, he suggested, was really just about conservative “dissidents” wanting to be “protected” from the left. He pointed to the fact that the party didn’t bother to develop a policy platform for the 2020 presidential election as evidence that Republicans had abdicated their political responsibilities. “That’s disgraceful, in my opinion,” he said. “What’s the point in having a convention or a political party more broadly if you can’t be bothered to define what it is you stand for? I found that contemptible.”

Meanwhile, Carlson’s show has been the arena for the cultural combat exciting the right. The controversy over CRT, which has fueled right-wing activism on the state and local level, took off after researcher Christopher Rufo appeared on the show to argue that it had infiltrated the U.S. government. A frenzy over how race is taught in schools soon followed. According to the *Washington Post*, the anti-CRT organization No Left Turn in Education, which is dedicated to opposing antiracist education, saw its Facebook group jump from 200 page views to 1 million in the week after its leader appeared

‘I’ve never met a white supremacist in my entire life ... Maybe I’m surrounded by them and don’t know about it.’

—Tucker Carlson



on *Tucker Carlson Tonight*.

Some critics, even on the right, say that Carlson is being cavalier about his influence. “He doesn’t understand his responsibility and the implication he has in actual people’s lives,” said Elle Kalisz, former vice president of communications for Gen Z GOP, a conservative youth group. “These aren’t just Fox News viewers. They aren’t just numbers. They are believing the absolute mess that Tucker Carlson is feeding them. And he knows, but he doesn’t take responsibility for that.”

Studies have suggested that Carlson has the ability to alter viewers’ behavior. Early in the pandemic—before he began arguing that the COVID-19 threat was overblown, before he called Biden’s mass-vaccination efforts “the biggest



scandal of my lifetime”—Carlson was more concerned about the virus than Hannity and other Fox hosts. He even traveled to Mar-a-Lago to urge President Trump to take the outbreak more seriously. Researchers from Harvard and the University of Chicago found that during this period, Carlson viewers started changing their behavior—like washing their hands more frequently, and canceling travel plans—three days earlier than the baseline Fox News viewers. Hannity viewers started changing their behavior four days later than the baseline. As a result, the researchers argue in a working paper, Carlson viewers started taking the pandemic seriously roughly a week before Hannity viewers did—a difference they say led to fewer cases and deaths in areas

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Once a fixture of D.C., Carlson now spends more time in Maine

with higher Carlson viewership. (The Fox News spokeswoman pointed out that Hannity has since endorsed mask wearing, encouraged social distancing and said he planned to get the COVID-19 vaccine.)

The same researchers also suggest in a different working paper that Carlson’s show has a powerful effect on willingness to share antiminority views. In February, they designed an experiment in which they gave conservatives the opportunity to tweet a petition to deport all Mexican immigrants. The participants were all shown a video of Carlson linking immigrants to serious crimes, but

only some were allowed to say they had seen the segment before sharing the petition. Those who could refer to the Carlson video were roughly 33% more likely to want to share the petition. “Carlson is very good at providing excuses for people to express beliefs that they otherwise might feel uncomfortable with,” said Aakaash Rao, a Harvard researcher who co-authored the study. He can “legitimize views that were previously seen as extreme and bring them into the mainstream.”

Of course, Carlson disputes the notion that extremist views are more prevalent on the right than the left. When I asked him why, for example, 23% of Republicans believe in the QAnon conspiracy theory, he immediately responded with a Tuck-erist whataboutism. “What percentage of primary-voting Democrats believe that you can change your biological sex just by wishing it so?” he asked. (Despite his purposely provocative description of trans people, Americans as a whole are becoming much more accepting; according to the Public Religion Research Institute, nearly two-thirds of all Americans and 47% of Republicans now say they’re “more supportive” of trans people than they were five years ago.)

“Not all the irrational people are on the left. There are irrational people on the right for sure,” he continued, twisting the premise of the question around itself. “But the idea that it’s the rational people vs. the irrational people is not actually true. If you think the main threat to America is white supremacy, when there’s not a single number that shows that’s even close to true, then you’re not rational.”

Here’s a single number: white supremacists and far-right militias were responsible for 66% of the domestic-terrorism threats in 2020, according to a study from the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and have been responsible for the most domestic-terrorism threats of any ideological group since 1994. I tried to make a point to that effect to Carlson; once again, I got derailed.

And round and round we went. Was Carlson repeating conspiracy theories, or was he creating them? Was he parroting the right-wing activists, or was he feeding them? The longer I talked to him, the harder it was to know. —*With reporting by MARIAH ESPADA, NIK POPLI and SIMMONE SHAH* □

Wage *Rage*

**WORKERS WANT HIGHER PAY, GENEROUS BENEFITS AND
BETTER TREATMENT. AND THEY'RE GETTING IT**

By Alana Semuels



Xue Vang had long known that his job deicing planes, loading bags and chocking wheels

at the Missoula airport was dangerous, especially in the Montana winter, when blinding snow and rain obscure the spinning engines that can suck in a human body.

But this past winter, the conditions at Unifi, which services planes for United and Delta, became intolerable. Because of the pandemic, understaffing was so bad that Vang was simultaneously handling two or three planes on the “ramp,” or tarmac, while making sure new trainees didn’t get inhaled into the engines.

One day, Vang’s colleague Jared Bonney was complaining that he’d been promised a raise for years that never materialized. “I was like, ‘Join the club,’” Vang recalls. Bonney’s pay was capped at \$10.40 an hour; Vang, whose job was more senior, was capped at \$11.50. Single adults would need to make \$14.13 an hour to support themselves in Missoula, according to MIT’s living-wage calculator.

Other Unifi workers started sharing complaints about low pay, lousy conditions and broken promises of raises, even though their jobs required specialized training and were critical to flight safety. A walkout could get them fired—Unifi was not unionized—and plans for one three years earlier had fizzled. But in April, when Bonney says a Unifi HR manager called the workers “unskilled” and undeserving of more money, getting fired didn’t seem so bad. Not when Panda Express and Taco Bell were posting job openings starting around \$14 an hour.

“It was just a boiling point for me,” says Bonney, 25, who couldn’t save money after paying his bills—even while living with his parents.

The strike happened on a cold Monday in April. Six of the 15 workers who had vowed to participate, including Bonney and Vang, showed up for their 4 a.m. shift and clocked in with the intention of telling their supervisor they were staging a walkout. They were met by the regional manager, who had been alerted to their plans by one of their colleagues. Rather than grounding flights, the workers had their badges confiscated.

Undeterred, they regrouped in the baggage area,

then went to Target to get supplies to make picket signs. For the rest of the week, they and two other workers who had missed the initial walkout picketed outside the airport. Within two weeks, all had been fired.

Vang has no regrets. “I hope that we spark something,” he says. “We want this movement to keep going—people deserve a living wage.” (Unifi did not return multiple emails and calls seeking comment.)

The pandemic was a breaking point for low-wage workers like Bonney and Vang who are fed up with being treated poorly while barely making enough to get by. Over the past 40 years, while wages have soared for higher-income workers, they’ve barely budged for people at the bottom of the income scale. From 1979 to 2019, wages for the lowest-paid decile of workers rose 3.3% when adjusted for inflation, while wages for the top 5% of workers rose 63.2%, according to the Economic Policy Institute, a left-leaning think tank. Over that time, as middle-class jobs were automated or sent overseas, and as more people vied for what was left in the wake of the 2001 and 2007–2009 recessions, employers had the upper hand. By one estimate, 53 million people—around 44% of U.S. workers—were low-wage before the pandemic, making an average of \$10.22 an hour.

But after 17 months of having to show up to jobs in person, putting their lives on the line while white collar and knowledge workers stayed home and saw their savings grow, America’s hourly workers may be gaining leverage. Entire shifts of employees at fast-food restaurants, amusement parks and airports are walking off their jobs, pasting handwritten notes on the doors that say WE QUIT. In Worcester, Mass., more than 700 nurses have been on strike since March 8, protesting working conditions and reduced staffing as their parent company, Tenet Healthcare, posted a large profit during the pandemic. Frito-Lay workers in Kansas went on strike July 5 to protest low wages and 84-hour workweeks, and Volvo employees in Virginia went on strike in April and again in July, calling for wage increases and signing bonuses. Farmworkers in California are walking off the job to demand higher pay.

Employers are being forced to raise wages and offer perks like college tuition and signing bonuses. What economists call the reservation wage for people without a college degree—the lowest pay people are willing to accept to take a job—rose 26% in March compared with the same time last year.

It’s too soon to tell if this is just a characteristic of an economy suddenly reopening and leaving employers scrambling for workers, or whether these changes will be permanent. There were signs, however, that workers were losing patience with years of low pay even before the pandemic. The rock-bottom unemployment rate (in November 2019, it hit 3.5%, the lowest in decades) gave them confidence to start pushing back.

In 2019, there were more work stoppages



involving 1,000 or more employees than in any other year since 2001. The federal minimum wage is just \$7.25 an hour, and 20 states have not increased their minimum wage beyond that. All other states have either tied the minimum wage to inflation, which ensures it will keep rising as prices do, or increased it.

Companies like Amazon and Costco announced as early as 2018 that they were increasing pay for all U.S. employees to \$15 and \$14, respectively, a move that forced competitors to pay more too. (In March, Costco raised its starting wage to \$16 an hour.)

“The workforce was getting restless after years of stagnant wages and a decline in union representation that traditionally gave them a voice,” says Thomas Kochan, a professor of work and employment research at MIT’s Sloan School of Management. “For low-wage workers, the pandemic demonstrated how much inequality there is—it’s really leading them to ask, Is this the kind of job I want? Or should I leave?”

A CENTURY AGO, widespread labor unrest led to an overhaul in the way workers were treated in America.

JARED BONNEY, 25
LOCATION: MISSOULA, MONT.

Used to earn \$10.40 an hour working outdoors on the tarmac servicing planes at the Missoula airport; now is an assistant manager at a local casino earning \$12 an hour plus tips

At the turn of the 20th century, the U.S. had low unionization rates and few social benefits compared with other industrialized nations. But as labor shortages grew during World War I and inflation rose at the end of the war, workers began to revolt. In 1919, one-fifth of the nation’s workforce participated in strikes, including the walkout of 350,000 steel workers.

Determined to head off unionization and maintain some control of workers’ lives, companies started to offer more benefits, figuring they could reduce turnover and increase productivity, says Joseph A. McCartin, a professor of history at Georgetown University. “Employers were realizing it simply doesn’t pay to treat workers like machinery that you are going to use up and throw out—when you do that, they organize,” McCartin says.

This ushered in an era of “welfare capitalism” in which companies offered benefits like pensions, apprenticeship programs, stock ownership and health insurance. U.S. Steel, which had refused to shorten the 12-hour workday during the 1919 strike, reduced it to eight hours in 1923. General Electric offered a pension plan and paid vacation for blue collar workers;



SARA STARK, 20

LOCATION: ATLANTA

Used to earn \$10 per hour working at Chipotle; now earns \$12.70 per hour at Starbucks

General Motors helped employees buy homes and set aside a portion of its profits for employee bonuses.

Accidents decreased, productivity went up, and turnover slowed; General Electric's turnover rate of 50% in the 1910s fell to half that by 1922.

What happened a century ago might sound familiar. Some of today's biggest companies are announcing big pay and benefit increases to attract workers and reduce turnover. Since the pandemic began, Target has said it would permanently raise the starting wage for U.S. employees to \$15 an hour, a move that Best Buy followed. Beef producer JBS USA said in March it would start paying two-year-college tuition for its 66,000 workers and their dependent children. In April, national garbage collection and recycling company Waste Management said it would offer 36,000 full-time workers and their dependents free tuition for undergraduate and graduate degrees in a partnership with Guild Education, which teams up with companies to offer educational benefits to employees.

This is a reversal from what most employers have been doing over the past few decades—cutting back benefits and pushing more financial responsibilities onto workers. But as America ages, many companies are realizing that a big share of their employees are going to retire soon and that they might not be able to

find enough people to replace them. The retirement rate of baby boomers shot up during the pandemic.

"It became apparent that we needed to do something fundamentally different and radical to attract and retain talent," Tamla Oates-Forney, the chief people officer at Waste Management, told me. Even before the pandemic, demographic shifts were making it difficult for Waste Management to find the drivers and technicians they needed; millennials and Gen Z workers were going into other industries, she says. Waste Management hopes that offering free education will attract people who may want to start out driving a truck and then work their way up in the company. It also added more money for backup childcare for workers during the pandemic.

Employees who don't feel their company offers advancement opportunities will leave for one that does. Sara Stark, 20, started working at a Chipotle just north of Atlanta when she turned 16. As she kept working there for two and then three years, she got just one raise, worth 15¢, to add to her \$10-an-hour starting wage. "I spent three years of my life there and nothing changed," she says. When Chipotle lost workers during the pandemic and Stark was pushed harder and harder, cleaning and sanitizing the restaurant with bleach by herself, she got fed up

and quit in October. She soon found a job at Starbucks, which offered a college-scholarship program, free mental-health benefits and opportunities for promotion. After just a few months, Stark was promoted to a managerial role, making \$12.70. She plans to use Starbucks' online education program next year to go back to school and study design. "The list of benefits Starbucks offered took up our whole training session," she says. (In a statement to TIME, Chipotle says it offers benefits like tuition reimbursement, mental-health care, and a bonus program. As of May, its average pay was \$15 an hour.)

Once they raise wages and offer benefits like free tuition, it will be difficult for companies to reverse them. Professional workers may be quitting their jobs en masse to go live their dreams, but the pandemic has also made low-wage workers take a step back and think about what they're doing with their work lives, says Rachel Carlson, the CEO of Guild Education.

"The plurality of workers are saying, 'O.K., \$15 an hour, but what do I do all day? And is there a job after that for me, and where does it take me?'" she says. "Career mobility is now the value proposition that matters for companies."

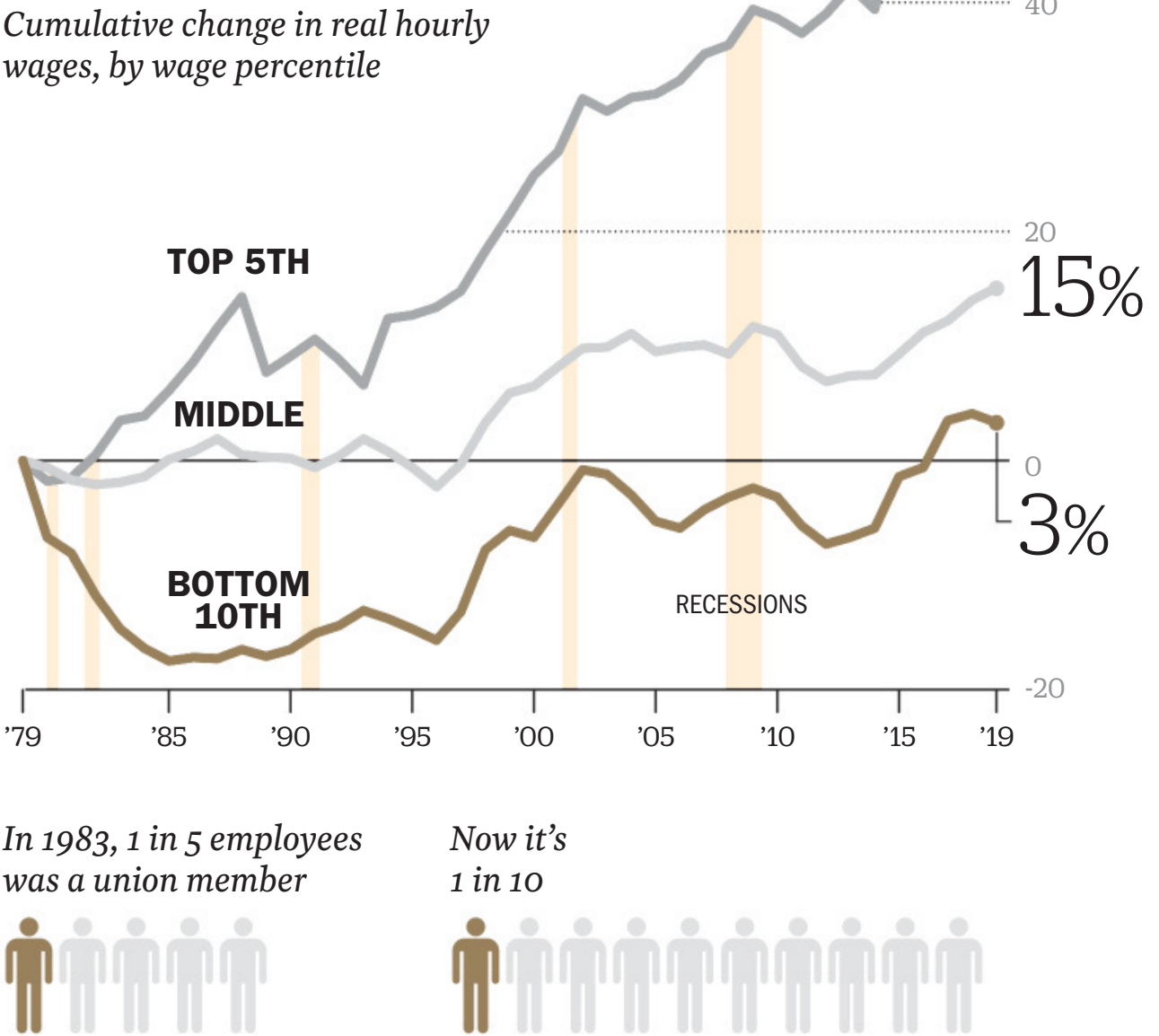
WORKERS' INCREASED LEVERAGE is already playing out in the job market. Wages have risen for three straight months, according to the most recent jobs report. They're a full 10% higher in the leisure and hospitality sector than they were two years ago—764,000 workers in that industry quit in May alone.

Some workers who walked away from bad jobs saw big pay bumps in their new positions. A month after Jared Bonney got fired from the Missoula airport, he went to a local casino to apply for a job. He was hired on the spot and promoted to assistant manager after a few months. His base wage is still low—\$12 an hour—but he can make a lot of money in tips, he told me. On a good night, he'll make \$23 an hour.

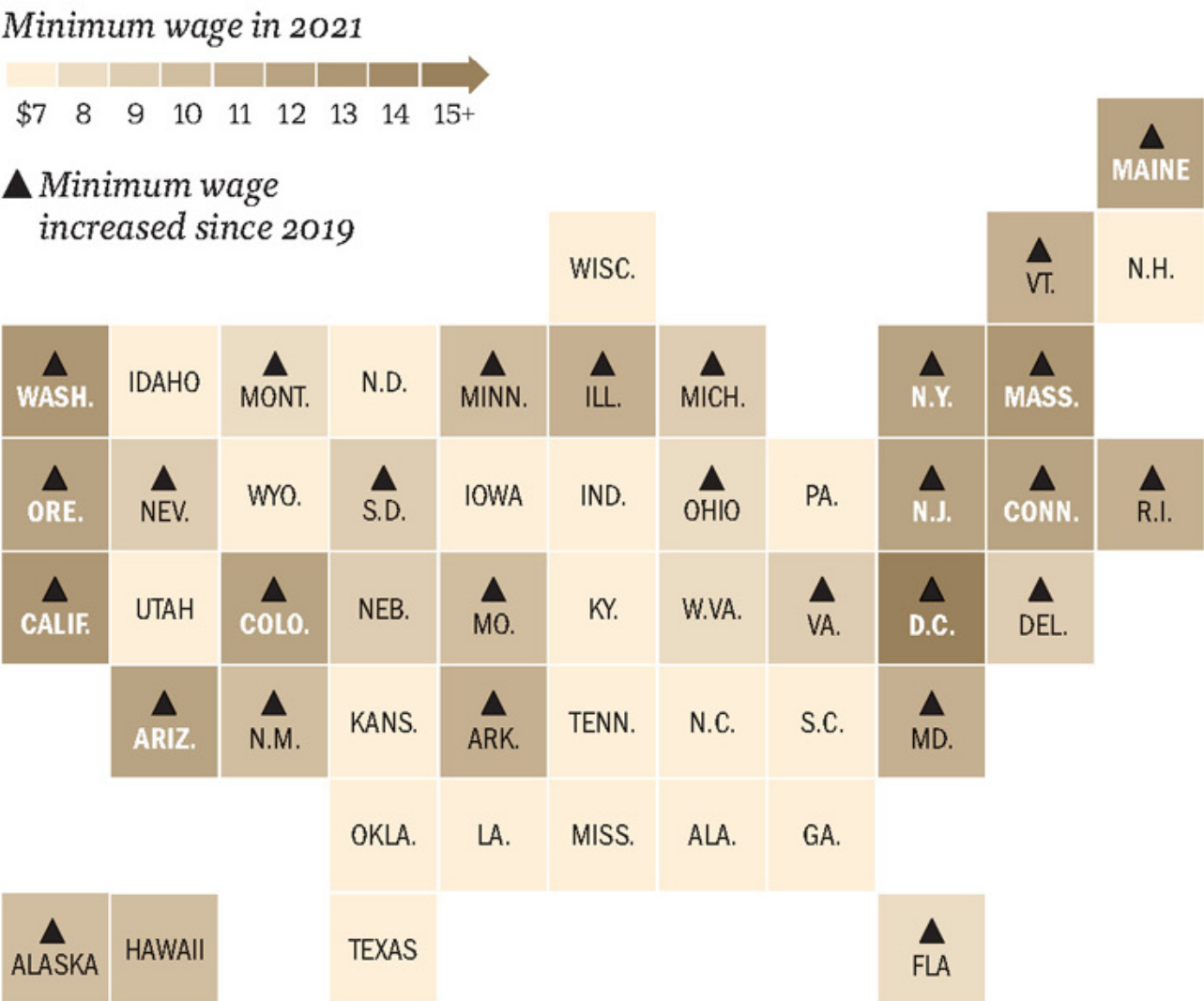
Sandra Sibert, 48, was one of the 3,400 workers at a Smithfield meat plant in South Dakota who rejected the company's initial contract offer in June, saying they deserved a raise as food and gas prices increased. Workers have been quitting en masse, she says—as many as 50 a week, up from one or two a week before the pandemic. After workers rejected the initial contract, which would have altered break time and kept pay the same, the company offered a \$1.75 raise, kept breaks the way workers wanted and included a \$520 bonus for them. Workers accepted. The course of negotiations "was not unusual," Keira Lombardo, Smithfield's chief administrative officer, said in a statement.

If Sibert and Bonney are making more than they did before the pandemic, they're still far from middle class. Many workers who participated in walkouts or strikes over the past year, or who switched jobs for higher wages, still may be struggling. They're squeezed by the highest apartment-rental costs in

LOWER-INCOME WORKERS HAVE HAD A ROUGH GO OF IT ...



... BUT AS DEMAND FOR THEM HAS RISEN, SO HAVE EXPECTATIONS



NOTE: SOME STATES HAVE MORE THAN ONE MINIMUM WAGE BASED ON EMPLOYER SIZE OR WHETHER EMPLOYEES ARE TIPPED. SOURCES: ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE; BLS; FED; NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES



SANDRA SIBERT, 48

LOCATION:
SIOUX FALLS, S.D.

Used to earn \$17 per hour at a Smithfield meat plant; got a raise to \$18.75 hourly

more than two years and prices for consumer goods that climbed 5.4% from a year ago, the biggest annual increase since 2008.

Even with a raise, berry pickers in California who walked out will be making around \$30,000 a year—if they work full time. Companies like Disney are offering \$1,000 hiring bonuses—but housekeepers will still be making just \$16 an hour if they take the jobs.

That's the result of four decades of declining union power and a stagnant minimum wage. "The idea that any short-run shortages that do exist would undo 40 years of employers' ability to suppress wages—it just does not ring true whatsoever," says Heidi Shierholz, a former Obama Administration economist who works at the Economic Policy Institute. The labor movement saw further setbacks this year when an effort to organize an Amazon warehouse in Alabama failed and the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a California regulation that let union organizers meet with farmworkers on farm property.

Progressive groups say that the PRO Act, which passed the House in March and would make it easier for workers to organize, is what's needed to help employees gain more power in the long term. Conservatives say people will be returning to

jobs once all states end more generous additional unemployment benefits offered during the pandemic.

Meanwhile, workers are seeking out the companies—and industries—that are giving raises alongside a path to better careers. Those companies aren't having trouble filling positions. After it announced its educational benefit, Waste Management's May recruiting drive attracted 1,200 people; the company made 420 offers, and 70% of those people have started working for the company. More than half of applicants mentioned the free college-tuition offer.

As Xue Vang is finding out, it can be hard to find work at companies that have decided to treat workers well. After Unifi fired him, it raised wages to keep the remaining workers on—but only to \$11 an hour. Vang started applying for other jobs and got a few offers, but he hasn't accepted one yet.

He wants to hold out for something better—he has his sights set on a full-time job with an airline, rather than at an airline contractor. A few of his former Unifi co-workers have gotten jobs at Alaska, where wages are higher, but Vang says the airline told him his timing was bad—it had just hired a flood of employees who had left jobs to work somewhere that paid more than the minimum wage. □

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The Empathy Trap

COMPANIES ARE EMBRACING THIS VALUE IN AN EFFORT TO KEEP EMPLOYEES HAPPY—BUT IT’S COMPLICATED

By Anne Helen Petersen

“EMPATHY IS ONE OF THE VALUES WE’VE HAD from our founding.” That’s what Chelsea MacDonald, SVP of people and operations at Ada, a tech startup that builds customer-service platforms, told me when we first got on the phone for this story in June. When the company was in its early stages, with about 50 people, empathy was “a bit more ad hoc,” because you could bump into colleagues at lunch. But that was pre-pandemic, and before a hiring surge.

Now, MacDonald says, empathy is built on communication (as many as five times a week, she communicates in some way to the entire company about empathy), through tools (specifically, one that tracks whom people communicate with most and who gets left out), through intimacy (cultivated through special-interest groups) and through transparency (senior leaders share notes after every meeting). At various points in our discussion, MacDonald describes empathy as “more than just, ‘Hey, care about other people’” and “making space for other people to make mistakes.”

She was one of a dozen executives whose communications directors reached out when I tweeted about the office trend of “empathy.” Adriana Bokel Herde, the chief people officer at the software company Pegasystems, told me about the three-hour virtual empathy-training session the company had created for managers—and how nearly 90% had joined voluntarily. Kieran Snyder, the CEO of Textio, a

predictive-writing company, said the biggest surprise about empathy in the workplace is that it and accountability are “flip sides of the same coin.” “We had an engineer give some feedback that was really striking,” she told me. “She said that the most empathetic thing her manager could do for her was be really clear about expectations. Let me be an adult and handle my deliverables so that I know what to do.”

All of these leaders see empathy as a path forward after 17 months of societal and professional tumult. And employees do feel that it’s missing from the workplace: according to the 2021 State of Workplace Empathy Study, administered by software company Businessolver, only 1 in 4 employees believed empathy in their organizations was “sufficient.” Companies know they must start thinking seriously about addressing their empathy deficit or risk losing workers to companies that are. Still, I’ve also heard from workers who think it’s all nonsense: the latest in a long string of corporate attempts to distract from toxic or exploitative company culture, yet another scenario in which employers implore workers to be honest and vulnerable about their needs, then implicitly or explicitly punish them for it.

IF YOU’VE READ ALL THIS and are still confused about what workplace empathy actually *is*, you’re not alone. Outside the office, developing empathy means trying to understand and share the feelings



or experiences of someone else. Empathy is different from sympathy, which is more one-directional: you feel sad for what someone else is going through, but you have little understanding of what it feels like. Because empathy is predicated on experience, it's difficult, if not impossible, to cultivate. At best, it's expanded sympathy; at worst, it's trying to force connections between wildly different lived experiences (see especially: white people attempting to empathize with the experience of systemic racism).

Applied in a corporate setting, the very idea of empathy begins to fall apart. Is it bringing their *whole selves*, to use an HR buzzword, to work? Is it cultivating niceness? Is it making space for *sympathy* and allowing people to air grievances, or is it leadership modeling vulnerability? Over the course of reporting this story, I talked to more than a dozen people from the C-suites of midsize and large companies that had decided to make empathy central to their corporate messaging or strategy. Some plans were more fleshed out and self-interrogating. Some thought an empathy training available to three time zones was enough. Others understood empathy as small gestures, like looking at a co-worker's calendar, seeing they've been in meetings all day, and giving them a 10-minute pause to get water before you meet with them.

But where did this current push for workplace empathy begin? According to Johnny C. Taylor Jr., president and chief executive officer of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and author of the upcoming book *Reset: A Leader's Guide to Work in an Age of Upheaval*, it sort of started with, well, *him*. In the fall of 2020, he'd been hearing a similar refrain from businesses: everyone was *tired*. Tired of the pandemic; of stalled diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) efforts; of their bosses and their employees. When he looked at the 2020 State of Workplace Empathy Study, then in its fourth year, the reasons for that exhaustion became clear. People were tired because they were working all the time, and trying to sort out caregiving responsibilities, and dealing with oscillating threat levels from COVID-19. But they were also tired, he believed, because there was a generalized empathy deficit.

That "empathy deficit" became the cornerstone of Taylor's State of Society address in November 2020. "Much of the resurgence of DE&I programming in the wake of the George Floyd killing was supposed to encourage open conversation and mutual understanding," he said. "But it often bypassed empathy. Well-meaning programs devolve into grievance sessions ... rather than listening and trying to relate."

SHRM is an incredibly influential organization, with more than 300,000 members in 165 countries. So while it's not as if empathy efforts were nonexistent before, Taylor's speech encouraged them. Even if members weren't there to listen to his words, his

A three-hour webinar will not create a culture of inclusion

message—and the data from the study—began to filter into HR departments, leaving a trail of optional learning modules and Zoom trainings in its wake.

THE BACKLASH STARTED shortly thereafter. Taylor acknowledges as much. "I see these companies jumping on it," he told me. "But it's not an initiative. It's not a buzzword. It's a cultural principle. If you make this promise, as a company, if you put this word out there, your employees are going to hold you to it." He adds that empathy should go both ways: "There's an expectation that employees can mess up; employers should be able to mess up too."

In the case of employees, many are frustrated by perceived hypocrisy. (All employees who spoke critically about their employers for this story requested anonymity out of concern for their jobs.) One woman told me her company, Viacom, has been doing a lot of

messaging about empathy, particularly when it comes to mental health. At the same time, it has switched to a health plan that's more restrictive when it comes to accessing mental-health professionals and care. (Viacom did not respond to multiple requests for comment.) Other employees report repeated invocations of empathy from upper management in staff meetings, but little training on how to implement it with those they supervise. As one female employee at a performing-arts nonprofit told me, "In a one-on-one meeting with my boss where I was openly struggling and tried to discuss it, I was told that mental health is important, but improving my job performance was *more* important."

A customer-service representative for a fintech company said empathy had been centered as a "core value" of the organization: something they were meant to practice with one another but also with customers. To quantify worker empathy, the company sends out customer-satisfaction surveys (CSATs) after each interaction. It found that dips in CSAT scores, which were measured by an automated system, reliably happened when a customer had a long hold time, which had little to do with whether the representative modeled empathy. Yet employees were still promoted based on these scores.

The central tension emerges again and again: "There's an irony, because there's the equity that you want to present to employees—while also giving special consideration and solutions for specific situations," Joyce Kim, the chief marketing officer of Genesys, which provides customer service and call-center tech for businesses, told me. "Those two are often incongruent." Put another way, it's hard, at least from a leadership perspective, to cultivate equal treatment for everyone while also making exceptions for everyone. If you allow an employee to work different hours, have different expectations of accessibility or have more leeway because of an



illness, how is that *fair* to those who don't need those things? How, in other words, do you accommodate difference while still maximizing profits?

What companies are trying to do, at heart, is train employees to treat one another not like productivity robots, but like *people*: people with kids, people with responsibilities, people shouldering the weight of systemic discrimination. But that runs counter to the main goal of most companies, which is to create and distribute a product—whether that's a service, an object or a design—as efficiently as possible. They might dress up that goal in less capitalistic language, but the end point remains the same: profits, the more the better, with as little friction as possible.

Within this framework, the frictionless employee is the ideal employee. But a lack of friction is a privilege. It means looking and acting and behaving like people in power, which, at least in American society, means being white, male and cisgender; with few or no caregiving responsibilities; no physical or mental disabilities; no strong accent or awkward social tics or physical reminders, like “bad teeth,” of growing up poor; and no needs for accommodations—religious, dietary or otherwise. For decades, offices were filled with people who fit this bill, or who were able to hide or groom away the parts of themselves that did not.

The women and people of color who were admitted into these spaces did so with an unspoken caveat that they would make themselves amenable to the status quo. They didn't bring their “whole selves” to work. Not even close. They brought only the parts

that would blend in with the rest of the workforce. If you were sexually harassed, you didn't make a fuss about it. If someone used a racial slur, same deal. If there were Christmas celebrations that made the one Jewish employee feel weird, that person was expected not to make waves. Bad behavior wasn't friction, *per se*. But a worker whose identity already created a form of friction complaining about it? That sure was.

Historians of labor have pointed out that this posture was particularly prevalent in office settings, where salaried workers were often saturated in narratives of a great, unified purpose. If employees took care of the company, and flattened themselves into as close to the image of the ideal worker as possible, the company would take care of them, in compensation and eventual pension. Which is one of many reasons that white collar office workers have been resistant to unionization efforts, which felt, as sociologist C. Wright Mills has noted, like a crass, almost hysterical form of office friction. Machinists and longshoremen were *laborers* and had no recourse other than the big stick of the union to advocate for themselves. Office workers could solve conflict man to man, boss to employee, like, well, the white gentlemen that they were—or at the very least pretended to be.

This mindset began to erode over the course of the 1970s, '80s and '90s—first, when massive waves of layoffs and benefit cuts destabilized the myth of the benevolent parent company. But the white maleness of the culture also began to (very gradually) shift in the wake of legal protections against discrimination related to gender, age, disability and, only recently, sexual orientation. White male workers remained dominant in most industries, particularly in leadership roles. But they began to lose their unquestioned monopoly on the norms of the workplace. Some changes were embraced; others, especially around sexual harassment and racial discrimination, were changed via legal force.

The overarching goal of HR departments in the past, going back to the field's origins in “scientific management” of factory assembly lines, was keeping employees healthy enough to work efficiently. After 1964, their task expanded to include compliance with legal protections, in addition to the continued work of keeping employees healthy and “happy” enough to do their work well. “Unhappiness,” after all, is expensive—according to a Gallup estimate from 2013, dissatisfaction costs U.S. companies \$450 million to \$550 million a year in lost productivity. Unhappiness, in other words, is friction.

But as the workplace continues to diversify, how do you maintain the worker “happiness” of a bunch of different sorts of people, from different backgrounds, with different cultural contexts? There are some obvious fixes: continuing to erode the power of monoculture (in which one, limited way of being/working becomes *the* way of being/working

to which all other employees must aspire); recruiting and retaining managers who actually know how to manage; creating a culture that encourages taking time off. But usually, the proposed solution takes the form of the HR initiative.

Take the 2010s push for “wellness,” which manifested in the form of mental-health seminars, gym memberships and free Fitbits. You can view these initiatives as part of a desire to reduce health-insurance premiums. But you can also see them as a means of confronting the reality of a workforce that, in the wake of the Great Recession, was anxious about their finances and careers, particularly as more and more workers were replaced by subcontractors, who enjoyed even fewer protections and privileges. Or consider the push for DE&I programs in the wake of Black Lives Matter protests in 2015. These initiatives aim to acknowledge a perceived source of friction—the fact that a company is very white, its leadership remains “snowcapped,” or the workplace is quietly or aggressively hostile to Black and brown employees—while also providing a proposed solution. The corporate DE&I initiative communicates that *we see this problem, we’re working to solve it, so you can talk less about it.*

Wellness and DE&I initiatives are frequently unsatisfying and demoralizing, particularly for those workers they are ostensibly designed to benefit. They often lean heavily on the labor of those with the least power within an organization. And they approach systemic problems with solutions designed to disrupt people’s lives as little as possible. (A three-hour webinar will not create a culture of inclusion.) But the superficiality is part of the point. Contain the friction, but do so by creating as little additional friction as possible, because a series of eruptions is easier to contain than a truly paradigm-shifting one that threatens the status quo and, by extension, the company’s public profile and profitability. According to a 2021 SHRM report, in the five years since DE&I initiatives swept the corporate world, 42% of Black employees, 26% of Asian employees and 21% of Hispanic employees reported experiencing unfair treatment based on their race or ethnicity.

The ramifications of racial inequity (lost productivity, turnover and absenteeism) over the past five years may have cost the U.S. up to \$172 billion. But instead of acknowledging what it is about the company culture that makes it difficult to retain diverse hires, or what might have to change to recoup those losses, companies blame individual workers who were a “bad fit.” DE&I initiatives don’t fail because there’s a “diversity pipeline problem.” It’s because those in power aren’t willing to relinquish any of it.

A similar contradiction applies to the rise of “corporate empathy.” At its heart, it’s a set of policies,

They will encourage ‘bringing the whole self to work,’ but only on a good day

initiatives and messaging developed to respond to the “friction” of a workforce unsettled by the pandemic, a continuing racial reckoning and sustained political anxiety, capped off by an uprising, *on a workday*, days after most of the workforce had returned from winter breaks. Many empathy initiatives are well-intentioned. But coming from an employer, they still, ultimately, say: *We see you are breaking in two, we are too, but how can we collectively still work as if we’re not?*

THEREIN LIES the empathy trap. So long as organizations view employees with different needs as sources of friction, and solutions to those needs as examples of unfairness, they will continue to promote and retain employees with the capacity to make their personalities, needs and identities as frictionless as possible. They will encourage “bringing the whole self to work,” but only on a good day. They will fetishize “sharing personal stories,” but only when the ramifications don’t interfere with the product or create interpersonal conflict. This is what happens when you conceive of empathy as *allowances*: Those who would benefit from it become less desirable workers. Their friction is centered, and their value decreases.

Our society is built around the goals of capitalism—and capitalism, and the ethos of individualism that thrives alongside it, is inherently in conflict with empathy. The qualities that make our bodies, selves and minds most amenable to those goals are prized above all else, and it is HR’s primary task to further cultivate those qualities, whether through “enrichment” or “wellness,” even when the most significant obstacle to either is the workplace itself.

Why do the declarations of empathy feel so hollow? Because growth and profit do not reward it. Companies, HR professionals, managers, even the best trained can do only so much. A large portion of the dissatisfaction that employees feel is the result of actively toxic company policy, thoughtless management and executives clinging to the status quo. But a lot of it, too, is anger at systems that extend beyond the office: the fraying social safety nets, the decaying social bonds, the frameworks set up to devalue women’s work, the stubborn endurance of racism, the lack of protections or fair pay for the workers whose labor we ostensibly value most. We don’t know how to make people care about other people. No wonder workplace initiatives can feel so laughably incomplete. How do you cultivate a healthy workplace culture when it’s rooted in poisoned soil? “It’s not just a workplace empathy deficit,” Taylor told me. “It’s an American cultural deficit.”

Petersen is co-author of the upcoming book *Out of Office: The Big Problem and Bigger Promise of Working From Home*

VIEWPOINT

We're in a bold new era at work

HOW BOSSES RESPOND WILL HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE

By Kevin J. Delaney

ADRIENNE BARNARD HAS WORKED in human resources since 2004, and has seen all manner of concerns and requests from workers. But Barnard, now senior vice president of people operations at Boston tech startup Mainstay, recently found herself taken aback at how emboldened some employees had become.

"There's a sense of entitlement that's building," says Barnard, who's had to deal with issues like remote workers expressing dissatisfaction with the system the company used to deliver them free lunches. "These employees are recognizing, 'You need me, and if I leave, it's going to be hard to replace me.'"

Employees in many industries are in a position of power that they haven't experienced in years, as the economy swiftly rebounds from the pandemic and businesses struggle to recruit and retain enough workers to keep up with the growth. The rate of monthly layoffs hit a record low in May, as job openings notched a record high. Meanwhile, more employees voluntarily quit their jobs in April than ever previously recorded—a clear sign that they're confident they can find better options.

On top of the tight labor market, the pandemic has led many people to reconsider the centrality of work in their lives and has loosened some ties to their employers. Surveys suggest roughly 40% of U.S. workers are open to switching jobs in the coming months.

"Workers, loosely defined, are having a field day because it's their market right now," says Kerry Sulkowicz, a psychoanalyst who coaches chief executives. To a significant extent, this is a really

good development. Workers had lost leverage with employers over the past four decades, amid a sharp decline in union membership and an intense focus on shareholders at the expense of employees. The recent rise in wages, and workers' increasing say in workplace practices, in many ways helps reset the balance.

Now, in order to attract and retain the workers they need, leaders are having to reassess their organizations' practices. The starting point for many is to offer more flexibility to employees in terms of when and where work is done. Admittedly, this doesn't come easily to a lot of executives, whose entire careers until now have reinforced the idea that people need to be in the office to be productive.

But almost 40% of workers—and 49% of those who are millennial and Gen Z—said they'd consider quitting if their employer didn't let them work remotely at least part of the time, according to a recent Morning Consult poll. Partly in response, a large portion of office-based companies are rolling out flexible schedules, which allow employees to work when they want, and hybrid arrangements, where they split their time between office and remote work.

Barnard predicts the four-day workweek may even catch on. Already, Kickstarter and other U.S. companies have committed to experimenting with the approach.

And in a high-profile test in Iceland, workers were just as productive and had improved well-being when they worked a shorter weekly schedule.

BOSSES CAN ALSO OFFER a sense of mission. "The single biggest thing you can do is make the work feel meaningful," says Laszlo Bock, the chief executive of Humu and former senior vice president of people operations at Google. Bock recommends that managers share stories about the impact of their teams' work. Research shows that the most successful organizations have a clear purpose at their core.

Another tactic is to conduct "stay interviews." Employers traditionally hold "exit interviews" when people leave companies, to better understand what went wrong. But managers would be better off if they proactively met with staff individually to better understand any problems they're having before they get to the point of quitting. Good questions

to ask include *What do you wish you could spend less time on?*

With the return to the office looming for a lot of companies, managers should also talk through the specifics of what that will look like, and help colleagues adjust and rebalance their work and life responsibilities.

The increasing empowerment of workers is frustrating and bewildering for many managers. But in the end, most of them are managed by someone else themselves. And if managers think deeply about what would attract them to an employer or make them stick around, it might help them succeed in this moment. As Bock says, "People forget that the thing that would help their teams the most is to give them what they themselves want."

'Workers ... are having a field day because it's their market right now.'

—Kerry Sulkowicz, CEO coach

Delaney is co-founder and editor in chief of Charter, a media and services company focused on transforming workplaces

Not Home Alone

SOME PET OWNERS ARE DEMANDING FLEXIBILITY TO CARE FOR THEIR NEW FURRY FRIENDS. BUT WILL U.S. COMPANIES EMBRACE ANIMAL-FRIENDLY OFFICES?

By Melissa Chan

THE SUBJECT LINE OF THE EMAIL FROM HIS employer was enough to whip Gus Azusenis into a frenzy. UPDATE, he read, a lump forming in his throat as he noted the urgency in all the capital letters. Then came the word he had been dreading for months: RETURN.

Even without reading the message, Azusenis knew what it would say—that after more than a year, employees at his Chicago bank would be going back to the office. Anxiety consumed the financial analyst as he tried to imagine how he could properly care for Finley, his pandemic puppy, if he had to leave her alone to work long hours, five days a week. “I went into sheer planning-for-disaster mode,” Azusenis says.

Across the room, blissfully unaware, Finley swished her tail back and forth, and Azusenis’ heart broke a little bit more. The year-old Newfoundland had essentially spent her entire life at home with him, and she had no clue their little bubble was about to burst. “I felt crushed,” Azusenis says.

He left the email unopened in a last-ditch effort to delay reality for one more day.

AS COMPANIES ANTICIPATING a post-pandemic U.S. look to reopen their offices, thousands of pet owners are experiencing similar moments of emotional turmoil. Poll after poll has shown that they’re worried about how returning to the office will impact their

➤
Gus Azusenis works from home in Chicago as Finley, the dog he adopted in March 2020, looks on



furry companions, particularly after the COVID-19 crisis created a surge in pet adoptions and situations in which many people rarely left their pets’ sides. In the summer of 2020, a survey of 3,000 pet owners found that 1 in 5 worried their pets would suffer separation anxiety. In the spring of 2021, as vaccinations augured a return to normal life, another survey found this fear shared by 69%.

What’s more, of 400 dog owners surveyed by the pet-product company Honest Paws, 67% said they would consider looking for a new job if their



company no longer offered remote work; 78% said they would stay if they could bring their pets to work. That sentiment is widely shared among young people. Nearly half of Gen Zers, ages 18 to 24, and a third of millennials, 25 to 40, said they would rather quit their jobs than leave their pets home alone full time, according to a survey of 1,500 pet owners by Banfield Pet Hospital, one of the nation's largest employers of veterinary professionals.

Azusenis, who adopted Finley in March 2020, counts himself as one of them. At 24, the first-time

dog owner used to prioritize his job above all else. But he's no longer willing to be chained to a desk for 12 hours, getting up only to use the bathroom or grab a snack, knowing Finley is waiting at home and depending on him for her every need.

"Getting a dog has really made me question how I'm working, from now and beyond," Azusenis says.

Clare Grindinger, 22, came to the same realization after a particularly busy day in March at the Dallas women's shelter where she worked. Grindinger didn't take her usual lunch break that day, so she

wasn't able to check in on Rumi, the 14-month-old mixed-breed pup she adopted in August 2020. When she returned home around midnight, Grindinger opened her front door to find Rumi surrounded by vomit. "That's a tough thing to come home to," she says. "I didn't know how sick he was." Three months later, she left her job for a human-resources position that lets her work from home permanently.

Banfield president Brian Garish says the survey results reflect his own newly developed anxieties about leaving his two cats at home alone. His bond with Ashin and Kenji grew stronger as he worked from home and saw a new side to the 2-year-old felines. Garish learned, for instance, that Kenji could open doors, something the crafty cat did one day as Garish was delivering a presentation on Microsoft Teams. While Garish was speaking, Kenji set off a security alert by opening the front door and walking out of the house.

"I guess I always wondered what they did when I was at work, and now I know," says Garish, who grabbed Kenji before he could go too far and then installed child-proof locks on his doors.

AS THE ECONOMY RECOVERS, employers nationwide are struggling to retain and recruit good workers, according to HR and labor experts as well as company executives interviewed by TIME. That's giving millions of employees more power to "call the shots," says Rue Dooley, an adviser with the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), a national trade group. "All the planets have aligned in such a way that employers now are fighting for the best talent," Dooley says.

Among the top worker demands are pet-friendly policies, whether lenient work-from-home rules or permission to bring pets into the office. Some 12.6 million U.S. households got a new pet after the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic in March 2020, according to the American Pet Products Association. A tally by the nonprofit Shelter Animals Count found that at least 269,000 pets were adopted from rescue groups alone in 2020, some 36,000 more than the year before.

Now, companies are searching for solutions that make both workers and pets happy. In Banfield's survey of 500 C-suite executives, half said they planned to start allowing pets in the workplace, joining major companies like Google, Amazon and Ben & Jerry's, which have long touted their pet-friendly corporate spaces. At least 59% of the executives surveyed said they were implementing new pet-friendly policies because of employee requests.

In December 2020, PuppySpot, a company that connects vetted dog breeders with

prospective buyers, broke its lease at its main West Hollywood, Fla., headquarters about two years early to move to a Jersey City, N.J., building that allows pets. It was a costly decision, but one that could not wait as half of prospective new hires were asking whether the office was pet-friendly, says Jonathan Cherins, the company's CEO. Being able to finally say yes was a "huge win" for PuppySpot's credibility as an animal-loving organization and its recruitment efforts, Cherins says.

"The ability to bring a dog to work is a real tangible piece of compensation," he says, adding that the Florida workers are now entirely remote.

At Animalso, a pet-care blog site, morale and productivity improved as soon as a handful of dogs and cats started appearing in the office for the first time in June 2020, according to Rachel Cassidy, a veterinarian consultant at the website. At the company's tiny West Covina, Calif., headquarters, lint rollers are available at every cubicle, and dogs can often be found chasing the newly purchased robot vacuum that works overtime to suck up mounds of fur. There's even talk of creating tiny uniforms to match their owners' company hoodies.

"Pets are so much an extension of us that it just makes sense for them to follow us to work instead of being bored at home," Cassidy says. "It sometimes makes us ask the question: Why didn't we think of this sooner?"



^
Kristen Aikey worries that Penny, her family's 15-year-old dachshund, is too frail to be left home alone

IF IT TOOK two pro-pet companies a shakeup from a global pandemic to ask that question, it's no wonder most U.S. companies still have not rolled out the red carpet for the four-legged. Despite the benefits and the huge concern of workers who became pet parents in the pandemic, only about 11% of U.S. workplaces allowed pets in 2019, according to SHRM statistics from the most recent year with available data.

There are countless reasons why. For one, thorny insurance, liability and workers'-compensation issues come into play if a dog bites another dog or, worse, a human colleague. In other instances, one person's office dog can end up being another person's nightmare if they're allergic, fearful of dogs or easily annoyed by barking.

"The risks are too variable and too manifold," Dooley says. "Just because it's good for the employees doesn't mean it's best for the organization."

Still, the number of pet-friendly workplaces has been slowly increasing for years. The growth, though small, has been promising for pet lovers—the 2019 figure is more than double the percentage in 2013. If there was ever a moment for widespread change, it's now, says Dooley, who predicts a massive spike in pet-friendly offices in 2021.

Pre-pandemic, few companies were paying attention to the value of pets, even though industry data shows pet owners collectively pour billions of dollars a year into caring for their critters. But now, pets are at the forefront, and it seems that changing office infrastructures and a more empathetic society are paving the way for their inclusion in the workplace, Dooley says.

For one thing, many companies have implemented hybrid telecommuting work schedules or staggered in-person hours, meaning fewer people in the office and thus a more accommodating environment to introduce four-legged office mates. To keep germs at bay during the pandemic, many workplaces put up plexiglass barriers to isolate individual cubicles, which can double as pet-friendly pens.

That's similar to how Ben & Jerry's has been able to successfully integrate dogs in its large Vermont headquarters, where there are free dog treats at the reception desk and complimentary doggy ice cream. Each dog owner's cubicle is enclosed with a baby gate, and each workspace features a mini plush sofa for a pooch. Pre-pandemic, the ice cream giant would host up to 40 dogs at a time. This year, Lindsay Bumps, Ben & Jerry's global marketing specialist, anticipates that even more new canines will join the corporate family once the office reopens sometime in the fall.

"Dogs have been a source of emotional support throughout quarantine times," says Bumps, adding that she would not accept a job unless she was allowed to bring Spock, her 9-year-old French bulldog, to work.

That mental-health boost is the catalyst the pets-at-work movement might need to gain momentum. The moment comes after more than 15 months of darkness from a global pandemic that has killed more than 600,000 people in the U.S., led to increased isolation and brought a slew of mental-health issues, including depression.

Before Azusenis adopted Finley, he was living by himself and feeling increasingly lonely. Finley gave him something to focus on, Azusenis says, and he poured all of himself into making sure his dog's time on earth was filled with happiness. "I felt like throughout this last year, I was wandering through a field in the dead of night, in pitch black," he says. "She kept me focused on the light."

For Cherins, the PuppySpot CEO, it was urgent after so much trauma that he break his headquarters' lease to ensure workers had a warm and friendly environment to return to. Dooley agrees, saying pets have the power to soften even the hardest hearts, especially after prolonged suffering. "We're increasingly afraid of each other, angry with each other, annoyed with each other, for no reason whatsoever," he says. "We need more sweetness."

People like Kristen Aikey are depending on it.

67%

Dog owners surveyed by Honest Paws who said they'd consider looking for a different job if they couldn't work from home

11%

U.S. workplaces that allowed pets in 2019, the most recent year with available data

59%

C-suite executives who said they were instituting new pet-friendly policies, according to a 2021 Banfield Pet Hospital survey

Aikey, 23, is the primary caretaker of Penny, her family's 15-year-old dachshund, who became blind last summer because of glaucoma. Aikey has been administering three different eye drops four times a day, along with eye ointment and thyroid pills twice daily. Her responsibilities begin as early as 4 a.m.—when Aikey takes Penny outside to relieve herself and gives the pooch her medication—and continue every few hours until bedtime.

Aikey has been working remotely for a Manhattan-based public relations company, but she and her parents, who have returned to the office, worry how they'll care for Penny if Aikey can no longer be the designated work-from-home steward. Their biggest fear is that Penny will fall down any of the three sets of stairs in the house when nobody is home. But they're also worried how their senior pet will react to being left alone in general.

"That would be a culture shock for her, right after a full year of having all the attention," says Aikey, who has vivid memories of the day her family bought Penny from a pet store in 2005, even though she was only in second grade. There was a discount on the 5-month-old wiener dog, who was wearing a pink bow and whose head was covered in little bumps from constantly whacking it against the water bottle in her cage.

Aikey was "obsessed" with Penny from the start, and they've only grown closer since 2020. "It's been the Kristen and Penny Show for the last full year," Aikey says. "How can you rip that away?"

PERHAPS NO ONE UNDERSTANDS this better than Azusenis. In Chicago, when Azusenis was ready to face reality on June 2—some 24 hours after the work email landed in his inbox—he finally read the message, and it confirmed his fears. His employer was strongly encouraging all workers to return to the office, where pets are prohibited, starting June 14. His heart racing, Azusenis called his mother back home in Cleveland for parenting advice. From 300 miles away, she first tried to reassure him that everything would be O.K., but reminded him that he'd known this would happen eventually.

On the morning of June 14, Azusenis could not get himself to put on a suit and tie and leave home. Instead, he signed on from home and hoped for the best—his strategy to this day. For now, there's been no disciplinary action for not returning to the office, and the company's request is merely a "strong suggestion," Azusenis says. He doubts his situation is sustainable in the long run, but he would rather take the risk than be separated from Finley.

"Neither of us really knows what that's like," he says. "Isn't that right, Finley?"

In his office-bedroom, the bearlike puppy was nestled near Azusenis fast asleep, still blissfully unaware. □

Society

In families that this year experienced firsthand the surge in attacks on Asian-American elders, the resilience of their loved ones is clear. To those who know the history, that spirit is no surprise

PILLARS OF STRENGTH

ESSAY BY HELEN ZIA • INTERVIEWS BY MELISSA CHAN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY EMANUEL HAHN FOR TIME

‘I’m a fighter.’

Growing up in San Francisco, **Victoria Eng**, left, and her brother **Andrew Eng**, top, pictured in Pacifica, Calif., on June 15, learned that respecting their elders was part of their Chinese culture. And they had frequent chances to express that value, as their grandparents picked them up from school nearly every day and cared for them while their parents worked. When violence against Asian-American elders rose drastically during the pandemic, Victoria was appalled—and when her own grandmother was attacked, she felt helpless. On May 4, **Chui Fong Eng**, center, ventured into Chinatown for the first time in over a year to buy groceries. While waiting at a bus stop, the 84-year-old was stabbed through her right arm with a blade that then entered her chest and punctured a lung. The Engs clung to one another as their matriarch underwent surgery. “I cried and I cried and I cried,” says **Linda Lim**, right, Chui Fong’s daughter-in-law. “I couldn’t believe that she survived this.” Less surprised was Chui Fong, who, as the eldest of her seven siblings, has always been tough. After arriving in the U.S. from Hong Kong in 1963, she sewed clothes in a factory until she could sponsor her parents and siblings. “I’m a fighter,” she says.



A

AS THE DAUGHTER OF IMMIGRANTS FROM CHINA, growing up in New Jersey in the mid-20th century, I knew one element of Chinese culture to be nonnegotiable: children were expected to revere parents, teachers and other elders. In many Asian-American cultures, elders have a special status; they are valued and beloved for the wisdom of their years and all they have endured. My brothers and I knew never to challenge or disrespect adults.

After a lifetime spent absorbing these lessons, it is especially painful today to see cherished elders of any background become targets of the kind of assaults that Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) people are now facing. Reports of hate incidents against our communities have skyrocketed, increasing by 74% from March 2020 to March 2021, with many of the most prominent instances targeting our senior citizens.

Plenty of us saw this crisis coming. In December 2019, we felt a familiar foreboding, one that comes with an understanding of how our country has treated people like us through history. With the discovery of the coronavirus in China, we braced ourselves. And sure enough, almost as fast as the news from Wuhan reached the U.S., Chinatowns began reporting intensified vandalism and harassment, while business plummeted. TV news stations

aired pictures of Chinese Americans—in the U.S.—to accompany their reporting on China, underscoring white America's entrenched patterns of ignorance and othering of Asian Americans. And in March 2020, Donald Trump's White House unleashed incendiary rhetoric that was followed by a surge in anti-Asian hate incidents across the country.

The COVID-19 pandemic and global economic crisis have inflicted terrible losses—of health, community and loved ones. Amid a toxic mix of misery, fear and racist innuendo, too many people have been ready to lash out. Social media has exploded with disturbing images of verbal and physical assaults on our elders. But to us, they are not the face-masked victims of grainy videos. They have names, faces, dignity. They are leaders; churchgoers; essential workers; shopkeepers; grandparents—beloved members of their families and communities. They want the world to know that they are survivors, not victims. That they are still standing, speaking out, fighting for their humanity.

IN THE 1980s, during another economic crisis, Americans heard a constant drumbeat of blame as the U.S. declared financial war on Japan, with frequent allusions to Pearl Harbor. In that racialized climate, a young Chinese American named Vincent Chin was beaten to death by two white autoworkers in Detroit who said, "It's because of you motherf-ckers that we're out of work," and were sentenced only to probation and fines.

Chin's tragic murder and the injustice of the case galvanized a national civil rights movement, one led by Asian Americans, with Detroit as its improbable epicenter. I had come to the city in the 1970s as a young activist and worked in a car factory before getting laid off during the recession. I saw firsthand how a frustrated populace could be persuaded to hate Japan for making competitive, fuel-efficient cars. Germany did too, but it's easier to target a scapegoat who looks different. Because I understood that dynamic, I also knew that we had to speak up. I became a lead organizer and spokesperson for that movement, as we worked to get others to see that Chin and his





‘I still wish for a better life.’

Mun Sung, left, and **Joyce Sung**, center, stand with their son **Mark Sung**, right, in the family’s Charlotte, N.C., convenience store on May 29. The elder Sung’s watched helplessly on March 30 as a man smashed glass with a pole, tore down racks and hurled racial slurs inside the shop they’ve owned for two decades. Despite regularly facing racism at work, Mun had never anticipated such violence. “I feel so terribly bad,” the 65-year-old says, “because how can people do that to us?” But soon it happened again. On May 25, after being told he didn’t have enough money for cigarettes, a customer shouted slurs as he pummeled the plexiglass over the counter until it shattered on Joyce, 63. “Knowing we’re going to get cursed out every day while we’re getting ready for work ...” she says, pausing. “We don’t know what words to use.” The pandemic drove their sales down by about 45%, so the Sung’s say they can’t take a break. Instead, they work seven 13-hour days a week and have a routine for responding to hate: call the police, assess the damage, file an insurance claim, then go back to work. It’s not the life Mun imagined when he left South Korea in 1983. “I had big dreams and high hopes,” he says. “I didn’t make it, but I still wish for a better life.”



‘The cornerstone of what America is.’

Elizabeth Kari holds her mother **Vilma Kari**, right, in her Manhattan apartment building on May 21. It's a rare moment of rest for Elizabeth, who took a leave from work to care for her mother after a brutal attack. On March 29, while Vilma was walking to church, a man kicked her to the ground, stomped on her face and shouted, "You don't belong here!" Vilma's injuries meant Elizabeth has had to help her with basic self-care; she also became an emotional bodyguard, shielding her mother from news coverage of the incident. "This, I feel, is the scariest time for me to be an Asian," says Vilma, 66, who moved to the U.S. from the Philippines nearly 40 years ago. "I never felt that before." In May, Elizabeth created a campaign called AAP(I belong), encouraging people who've encountered anti-Asian hate to share their stories. "I don't think it's anyone's right to tell anyone they don't belong in America," she says. "That's the cornerstone of what America is."



‘He isn’t a victim.’

Carl Chan, center, sits with his daughters **Crystal Chan**, right, and **Emerald Chan**, left, and his wife **Eleanore Tang**, above, at home in Alameda, Calif., on May 18. As president of the Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce, Carl, 62, has prioritized the protection of local elders. In 2020, he ramped up his efforts, handing out whistles and air horns to anyone who would take them. On April 29, when he was on his way to visit someone who’d been assaulted on a bus, he heard a man scream and yell a racial slur, then felt a blow to his head. Carl’s daughters, who live in New York, flew home as soon as they could. “It’s not easy for our family,” Eleanore says. But Carl, scraped and bruised, emerged even more determined. On May 15, he walked with his daughters and wife in a “Unity Against Hate” rally he helped organize. “While he was physically assaulted, he isn’t a victim,” Emerald says. “He’s showing that he’s strong.”

family were as American as anyone.

That intractable disconnect—being American yet perceived as something else—has long plagued our communities. Growing up, I often felt caught in a bizarre parallel universe. My teachers and neighbors would praise my brothers and me for being well-behaved, quiet Asian children even though we were so raucous, our parents had to insist on silence at the dinner table to keep us from yelling and fighting. There was the way we lived our lives, and then there was the way the world chose to see us.

Even Asians born here, like me, couldn't be "real" Americans, not when wars against Japan, Korea and Vietnam and the continuing cold war with China conjured images of an enemy that looked like my family. We were acceptable only if we adhered to the newly invented construct of the uncomplaining "model minority," and the people around us saw us through the filter of that stereotype.

AAPI invisibility is so deeply embedded in American culture that when I was a child, we were never seen on the news, in the movies or on TV, except as enemy intruders or obedient servants. We were completely missing from schoolbooks; this is still largely true, save for brief references to Chinese laborers building railroads or Japanese Americans being imprisoned en masse during World War II. When a recent survey asked people in the U.S. to name a prominent Asian American, the most frequent answer was "Don't know."

In college, I sought to educate myself about "my universe." Until then, I hadn't known that officials had systematically worked to rid the country of "Asiatics," or how violence by white people had targeted our communities. Nor had I been taught about the invaluable contributions we've made to this American democracy. Birthright citizenship? Everyone born in the U.S. can thank Wong Kim Ark, a Chinese American, for that promise. Asian Americans have also played key roles in the civil rights movement; farmworker organizing; Title IX; marriage equality; hate-crimes legislation and more. Researching my first book, *Asian American Dreams*, I discovered how much of our Asian-American universe has been missing

in mainstream tellings of my country's history. This wall of enforced ignorance continues to divide our worlds.

THE SILENCE REQUIRED of the "model minority" never bought acceptance. In my youth, I heard ugly slurs shouted at my family and watched, powerless, when my parents—the people I respected most—were subjected to prejudice and humiliation. In my elderhood, I can't count how many times I've been told to "go back where you came from," or asked where I'm "really from" when answering "New Jersey" is not enough.

Nearly 40 years after Chin's murder, I am dismayed that so many have expressed surprise, even shock, at the existence of anti-Asian racism. Back then, discourse on race was framed as Black and white, and in this millennium, it's much the same. Even as the most vulnerable and cherished members of our communities are under attack, we are still fighting to be seen—just as those who came before us fought for visibility and fairness in the 1800s and 1900s, and just as we sought justice for Chin. Today, with more than 23 million Asian Americans making up almost 7% of the U.S. population, our fellow citizens still know little to nothing about our shared history. After the mass killings of Asian Americans in Atlanta and Indianapolis this year, people seem more open to recognizing the reality of anti-Asian racism. But the challenge remains.

We can begin by recognizing the resilience of the AAPI elders who have been targeted in unacceptable, random acts of violent hate. In their faces, we see the long journeys of revered grandparents, aunts, uncles, mothers and fathers who have struggled and sacrificed for future generations. By bringing our Asian-American universe into focus for all to see, we hope you—our neighbors, co-workers, members of all faiths and beloved communities—will see our elders as we see them, and as you see your own: the ones who made the foundation of our families, our homes and our country with their blood, sweat, tears and love. In knowing their stories, perhaps we can finally bring our parallel universes together. —*With reporting by* SANGSUK SYLVIA KANG *and* SIMMONE SHAH

Zia is an author, journalist and activist

'I'm proud of what he did.'

Tommy Lau, 63, stands beside his older sister **Maggie Wong** inside his Brooklyn home on May 22. On March 23, Lau rushed to defend an elderly Asian couple being robbed of their groceries—a choice that Wong says reflects her brother's typical boldness. But when Lau intervened, the man spat on his face, punched his head and called him a racial slur. He has not been able to return to work as a city bus driver because of his neck and shoulder injuries. Wong says it's been difficult to watch her brother continue to struggle months later. "I feel bad," she says, adding that she supports him, emotionally and financially, whenever he needs it. "I'm proud of what he did." And despite everything he's endured, Lau doesn't regret getting involved that day. He has faced racism since immigrating to the U.S. from Hong Kong at age 3—his elementary-school classmates bullied him so often about his birth name, Kok Wah Lau, that his teacher changed it to Tommy—and he has had enough. "The lowest low of people does that, attacking the elderly," he says. "I just couldn't take it anymore."





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TIME

The World's 100 Greatest Places

The challenges of the past year and a half have transformed our world, and few industries have been as affected as travel, tourism and hospitality. In many ways, our third annual list of the World's Greatest Places is a tribute to the people and businesses at the forefront of those industries who, amid extraordinary circumstances, found ways to adapt, build and innovate. It shines a light on ingenuity, creativity, revitalization and reopenings in destinations across the world. To compile this list, TIME solicited nominations of places from our international network of correspondents and contributors, with an eye toward those offering new and exciting experiences. The result: a list of 100 unique destinations, from the idyllic Portuguese town of Arouca, now home to the world's longest pedestrian suspension bridge, to the continent of Antarctica, which this December will experience a rare total solar eclipse. And while it may not be possible to safely visit each place just yet, they're all well worth reading (and dreaming) about until it's time, once again, to explore.

— FEATURING —

ACCRA, GHANA **78** / ANTARCTICA **62** / AROUCA, PORTUGAL **60** / ATHENS **76** / BANGKOK **65** / BATH, U.K. **59** / BEIJING **66** / BELIZE **70** / BENGUERRA ISLAND, MOZAMBIQUE **67** / BERLIN **72** / BIG SKY, MONT. **83** / BODRUM, TURKEY **68** / CÁCERES, SPAIN **77** / CAIRO **56** / CANNES, FRANCE **70** / CHIMANIMANI NATIONAL PARK, MOZAMBIQUE **81** / CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND **72** / COIMBRA, PORTUGAL **56** / COSTA RICA **76** / DENVER **62** / DESARU COAST, MALAYSIA **61** / DESIGN DISTRICT, LONDON **78** / DUBAI **67** / EDINBURGH **56** / FAROE ISLANDS, DENMARK **66** / GOLD COAST, AUSTRALIA **63** / GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN **65** / GRENADA **73** / GYEONGJU, SOUTH KOREA **75** / HANOI **78** / HELSINKI **80** / HO CHI MINH CITY **71** / HOKKAIDO, JAPAN **68** / HOUSTON **57** / HUDSON VALLEY, NEW YORK **78** / INDIANAPOLIS **75** / ISLAND OF HAWAII **70** / JAIPUR, INDIA **71** / JASPER, ALBERTA **74** / JOSÉ IGNACIO, URUGUAY **64** / KHAO YAI NATIONAL PARK, THAILAND **77** / KRUGER NATIONAL PARK, SOUTH AFRICA **79** / KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA **67** / LA PAZ, MEXICO **72** / LAKE KHOVSGOL, MONGOLIA **60** / LAKE KIVU, RWANDA **72** / LAS VEGAS **66** / LIJIANG, CHINA **61** / LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA **59** / LOIRE VALLEY, FRANCE **64** / LOS ANGELES **71** / MADRID **60** / MALDIVES **58** / MARRAKECH, MOROCCO **83** / MEMPHIS **79** / MENDOZA, ARGENTINA **70** / NAPA VALLEY, CALIFORNIA **58** / NEGEV DESERT, ISRAEL **57** / NEW ORLEANS **73** / NEW RIVER GORGE NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE, WEST VIRGINIA **70** / NEW YORK CITY **58** / NORTH GOA, INDIA **64** / NORTHLAND, NEW ZEALAND **69** / NUUK, GREENLAND **71** / ODENSE, DENMARK **60** / OKAVANGO DELTA, BOTSWANA **74** / ORLANDO **64** / OSAKA, JAPAN **65** / OSLO **78** / PARIS **81** / PATAGONIA NATIONAL PARK, CHILE **80** / PHILADELPHIA **74** / PHU QUOC, VIETNAM **61** / PUERTO ESCONDIDO, MEXICO **60** / QUITO, ECUADOR **65** / REYKJAVÍK, ICELAND **77** / ST. LOUIS **76** / SANTA FE, N.M. **72** / SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA, SPAIN **79** / SÃO VICENTE, CAPE VERDE **69** / SARASOTA, FLA. **66** / SAVANNAH, GA. **58** / SEATTLE **80** / SIARGAO, PHILIPPINES **76** / SICILY, ITALY **59** / SIEM REAP, CAMBODIA **76** / SINGAPORE **82** / SOUTHERN CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS, ROMANIA **79** / SYDNEY **68** / TAIPEI **58** / TALKEETNA, ALASKA **77** / TALLINN, ESTONIA **65** / TOKYO **73** / TUSCANY, ITALY **63** / UYUNI SALT FLATS, BOLIVIA **82** / VENICE **83** / VIRGIN GORDA, BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS **61** / WADI DANA, JORDAN **62** / WINNIPEG, MANITOBA **82** / ZURICH **82**

With reporting by Leslie Dickstein, Mariah Espada, Alejandro de la Garza, Nik Popli, Madeline Roache and Simone Shah

EDINBURGH

A refined reopening

The historic Scottish capital is welcoming visitors back with a wealth of new establishments. The Gleneagles Hotel Group is set to launch its first city hotel this fall, **Gleneagles Townhouse**, with 33 rooms, a roof terrace and a members' club. Recently opened on the former site of a renowned brewery, contemporary hotel **Moxy Edinburgh Fountain-bridge** features a rooftop bar overlooking the city's historic castle and a built-in cinema. And a new fine-dining restaurant, **Lalique**, an hour's drive from the city at Scotland's oldest working distillery, **The Glenturret**, launches in July and will be helmed by Michelin-star-winning chef Mark Donald—and feature whisky as a key ingredient in its contemporary Scottish cuisine. —*Madeline Roache*

CAIRO

New vantages on unique treasures

After 10 years of delay and anticipation—and the pandemic's decimation of the vital national tourism economy—the **Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM)** is finally scheduled to open this year in Giza. A state-of-the-art architectural marvel of glass and concrete, GEM will become the largest archaeological museum in the world, with more than 100,000 ancient artifacts—including thousands from the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamun—housed within its modern walls. In addition to GEM, the Egyptian government is investing heavily in other projects designed to lure future travelers to the capital. The **Ahl Misr Walkway** is near completion along the Nile Corniche, creating a pedestrian-friendly outdoor space to check out the waterway. Also under development is the forthcoming **Cairo Eye**, which promises to be the largest observation wheel in Africa, expected to commence spinning in 2022. Elsewhere, the new **St. Regis Cairo** features a library room, spa and floor-to-ceiling windows to make the most of the river views. Just 15 minutes from the Pyramids of Giza, the **Crowne Plaza West Cairo–Arkan** is set to open with 187 rooms later this year. —*Rebecca Katzman*

Coimbra, Portugal

Fresh claims to fame

Located midway between Lisbon and Porto, Portugal's 13th century former capital has long been known for the University of Coimbra, the oldest in the country, founded in 1290. Now the riverfront city is welcoming a host of new attractions. Among them: Swedish bedmaker Hastens' first-ever hotel, the 15-room **Hastens Sleep Spa**, a micro-hotel that aims to provide superior slumber by offering super supportive beds with three-spring mattress systems. Meanwhile, the **Center for Contemporary Art in Coimbra** will display works by renowned artists such as Mário Cesariny, Peter Zimmermann and Helena Almeida. Coimbra is also investing millions toward improving and preserving national monuments, with restoration work already under way on the ruins of the **Monastery of Santa Clara-a-Velha**, built on the bank of the Mondego River. —*Tamara Hardingham-Gill*





The University of Coimbra courtyard, with the Mondego River in the background

NEGEV DESERT, ISRAEL

Desert cultivation

This arid stretch of southern Israel brings the past alive: it's home to the bohemian, Bedouin-influenced city of **Be'er Sheva**, a peak rumored to be the real Mount Sinai, and amber canyons and concealed valleys that make for amazing hikes. Sinai or not, **Mount Karkom's** 7,000-year-old rock carvings will tempt the amateur historian; farther south, agriculturalist Elaine Solowey is cultivating dozens of threatened or endangered plants, such as ancient date palms and frankincense, in a **special garden, due to open to the public in 2022**. Nearby, vintners have revived a long-dead Nabataean wine region by using more innovative approaches to grape growing, like grafting them onto vines that can withstand higher levels of saline. And the **Six Senses Shaharut**, opening in August, will offer luxurious villas that blend into the cliffside, providing boundless desert views. There is also a tented Bedouin-style restaurant, camel stables and a full-service spa. —Lucy Thackray



HOUSTON

Lone Star stunner

Houston—which welcomed around 100,000 new residents in 2019—has emerged as one of the most diverse cities in the American South. It also boasts a plethora of exciting dining options, including **Musaafer**, which offers a menu inspired by two chefs' 100-day journey through India. Downtown, **POST Houston**, a concert venue, food and market hall, and work space, will open in a former post office this fall. Meanwhile, **Late August**, a highly anticipated restaurant led by *Top Chef* finalist Dawn Burrell, will soon open in the city's new innovation district. Nearby, further cultivating the city's creativity, is **Project Row Houses**, a community-based arts organization that restored a group of row houses to provide art studios and exhibition spaces for local artists and affordable housing for young mothers. —Kayla Stewart

SAVANNAH, GA.

Revitalized riverfronts

The riverfront of the Hostess City of the South is undergoing some radical changes, transforming underutilized space into new districts, bringing more of the city's hidden treasures into view. On the site of a former power station, the newly opened **Plant Riverside District** offers multiple restaurants, most with river views and outdoor seating, such as the German-style **Riverside Biergarten**. Its towering dual smokestacks hover above music venues, morning mindful-yoga classes and the new **JW Marriott Savannah**, which features a rooftop lounge. About a mile east is **Eastern Wharf**, a 54-acre development that will include the **Thompson Savannah**. More buzzy openings include **The Jules**, housed in a renovated 19th century mansion on the Historic District's Chippewa Square, and the **3 Points Food Court**, a food-truck park that hosts yard games, movie nights and live musical acts. —*Janine Clements*



MALDIVES

An ever changing archipelago

The Maldives was the first country to offer quarantine-free stays for anyone who is vaccinated. In an effort to draw even more visitors, it also has plans to offer vaccines to tourists on arrival—once all residents have had the opportunity to receive a jab, of course. And there are plenty of other reasons to keep an eye on these electric blue atolls. The latest man-made Maldivian archipelago, **Fari Islands**, features restaurants, boutiques and a beach club, accessible to guests from the islands' newly opened luxury resorts: **Patina Maldives** and the **Ritz-Carlton Maldives**. The most extensive coral-regeneration project in the Maldives can be found at the eco-friendly favorite **Velaa Private Island**. And in 2022, construction begins on a pioneering floating city, created to stave off rising sea levels. —*Katie Lockhart*



New York City

Back in business

New York City is back from its pandemic hibernation, and soon, live theater will be too: **Broadway** is set to reopen in September. Art lovers are already taking in reopened or reimagined museums, like **Dia:Chelsea**, a contemporary installation space, and the **Frick Madison's** (formerly Frick Collection) new residence in the Breuer on Madison Avenue, a building previously occupied by the Met. New restaurants and bars like **Harlem Biscuit Company**, **Sona** and **Em Vietnamese Bistro** offer creative menus and the opportunity to support BIPOC-owned dining, and dim sum favorite **Jing Fong** is reopening in Chinatown. **Moynihan Train Hall**, a new 17-track expansion of Penn Station, brings the future of travel to the forefront, while heady outdoor offerings, like the city's newest Hudson River park, the Thomas Heathwick-designed, Barry Diller-funded **Little Island (above)**, provide space for respite and play. —*Kayla Stewart*

NAPA VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

Restoring wine country

In fall 2020, Napa Valley—renowned for fine wine, farm-to-table restaurants and laid-back luxury resorts—was devastated by California's record-setting wildfires. Though scars remain, the region is on the road to recovery. Wine-tasting rooms are reopening, and two new high-end resorts will debut in 2021: **The Four Seasons in Calistoga**, the only resort in California built amid a working winery; and the 700-acre **Stanly Ranch** in Carneros, where most cottages have outdoor showers and some have outdoor fireplaces. Add to these the new restaurant **Fleetwood**, offering wood-fired pizza, and a new tasting room in a restored 19th century mansion at Faust winery, and this fertile part of Northern California is demonstrating its resilience, as well as its trademark hospitality. —*Matt Villano*

Taipei

Culture and quiet

This year's slate of openings further burnishes Taipei's credentials as a cultural capital. Spring saw the debut of the city's **National Center of Photography and Images**, an institution dedicated to the research, preservation and exhibition of Taiwan's photographic history. Meanwhile, the **Taipei Performing Arts Center**—with its striking architecture, defined by a giant silver sphere protruding from one side of the building (*right*)—seems set to become a city landmark when it opens in 2022. Another new arrival: Hilton's 175-room **Hotel Resonance Taipei**, which boasts a boxy black-and-white exterior designed to evoke frames on a film roll. Visitors looking for a respite from the fun and fast pace of the city can visit nearby **Yangmingshan National Park**, which was named the World's First Urban Quiet Park in June 2020. —*Dan Q. Dao*





A suite at Verdura Resort on the island of Sicily

Sicily, Italy

History by the seaside

Italy's largest island is urging visitors back with government-subsidized incentives including free hotel stays and museum access. (Vouchers are in limited supply, sold through authorized travel agencies.) New seaside resorts add further allure to Sicily's plentiful sights—which include **Greek temples, Byzantine mosaics and one of Europe's most active volcanoes.** The latest Rocco Forte property, **Villa Igiea**, housed in a historic villa overlooking the bay of Palermo, opened in June after a two-year renovation, and offers sea views from its patio and terraced gardens. Another Forte offering, **the Verdura Resort** on the other side of the island, just debuted new villas and will soon have a golf course. Also fresh on the scene is **the San Domenico Palace, Taormina**, now a Four Seasons hotel situated on a cliffside on the site of a 14th century convent, with an infinity pool and three restaurants for guests to choose from. —*Brekke Fletcher*



LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

A culinary capital

The Slovenian capital's already acclaimed gastronomic scene got a huge boost with the 2020 unveiling of its first ever Michelin Guide—six of its restaurants have been awarded a total of seven Michelin stars. Among them: chef Jorg Zupan's much lauded **Atelje**, which reopened in May—after pivoting to takeout during the pandemic—returning to its ever changing tasting menu showcasing Slovenian ingredients, like dry-aged **Krskoolje** pork. **Odperta kuhna** (Open Kitchen), the Friday-night food market featuring the area's top food purveyors, whose return has been highly anticipated, is also one of the city's most beloved culinary traditions. Other notable additions include the **Fuzzy Log**, an eco-friendly hostel whose guests can sleep in rooftop tents and log cabins (among other options), and soon, **Cukrarna**, a repurposed 19th century sugar refinery, which will debut next year as a new mixed-use cultural venue.

—*Tamara Hardingham-Gill*

BATH, U.K.

Leaning into literary roots

The southwestern British city of Bath may soon be better known for its pop culture contributions than the ancient Roman baths for which it's named. Author Mary Shelley created scientist Victor Frankenstein and his monster while living in the city in the early 19th century, and this summer the **House of Frankenstein** will open and welcome its first guests to brave an immersive exhibition that includes escape rooms inspired by Frankenstein's laboratory. Elsewhere around town, fans of the Netflix series **Bridgerton**—which was filmed, in part, in Bath—have been pouring into the city to immerse themselves in the drama and scandal of the Regency-era romance with new guided tours. There's no shortage of places to stay downtown, including the **Hotel Indigo Bath**, a 166-room boutique hotel set in a historic Georgian terrace house, which opened in fall 2020.

—*Madeline Roache*

PUERTO ESCONDIDO, MEXICO

Rising design destination

On the Pacific coast, a small surf town known for its mix of laid-back chic and untamed oceanfront is quickly transforming into a design hub. In May, Puerto Escondido attracted the attention of international curators and collectors with its inaugural Mexican Design Fair—a buzzy event showcasing the work of an array of creators including designer Liliana Ovalle and architect Pablo Kobayashi. Recent openings in the area include two boutique beachfront properties: **Casona Sforza**, a hotel whose exterior is defined by a series of clustered brick arches, and **Hotel Escondido**, a minimalist enclave with 16 thatched-roof bungalows. New restaurants and bars are also popping up, such as **Espacio Cometa**, an unfussy outdoor sand-floored café that serves contemporary breakfast specialties like avocado toast and açai bowls, as well as cocktails and dinner at night. Later this year, celebrated local chef Alejandro Ruiz will open **Casa Oaxaca del Mar**, a new seaside outpost of his Oaxaca City restaurant focusing on locally caught seafood. —*Brekke Fletcher*

ODENSE, DENMARK

Fairy-tale city

An hour and a half by train from Copenhagen, Odense is located on a quiet island with colorful half-timbered houses and crooked cobblestone streets. Hans Christian Andersen was born in the sleepy city, which this summer will see the opening of the brand-new **H.C. Andersen House**. Designed by Japanese architect Kengo Kuma, the museum was designed with his famous fairy tales in mind. Exhibitions include experiential tributes to the tales: in a Little Mermaid-inspired area, for example, visitors can lie down beneath a glass ceiling to look up into a pool of water and imagine they are in the ocean. If traversing the magic of Andersen's stories works up an appetite, the nearby **Storms Pakhus** street-food hall—a 100-year-old warehouse with stalls offering everything from freshly baked naan to fish and chips—is a decidedly contemporary counterpoint. —*Karen Burshtein*



516 Arouca, the world's longest pedestrian suspension bridge

Lake Khovsgol, Mongolia

Untold depths

The little sister of Russia's better-known Lake Baikal, Mongolia's extraordinary **Lake Khovsgol** has all of the beauty and none of the crowds (at least for now). At depths close to 900 ft., this astonishing ancient body holds about 70% of the nation's fresh water. A new airport south of Ulan Bator will triple existing capacity this year, and the plan to add **nonstop Mongolian Airlines flights from the U.S.** is set to make the "Blue Pearl of Mongolia" more accessible than ever before. —*Yulia Denisyuk*



MADRID

Safeguarding tradition

Social distancing is not conducive to the intimate art form of Spanish flamenco, nor to Madrid's famous *tablaos*, where the dance is usually performed. While Spain's Ministry of Culture invested more than €1.1 million in flamenco last year to help the industry ride out the pandemic, the next few months will be crucial in determining whether the city's *tablaos* can survive beyond 2021. New luxury hotels opening this year are sure to help by attracting first-time and return visitors, including the remodeled **Rosewood Villa Magna**, the brand's first Spanish property; **Mandarin Oriental Ritz**, a recently restored Belle Epoque hotel in the center of the capital; and the 200-room **Madrid Edition**, set in a historic square featuring a roof terrace and sky bar. —*T.H.G.*

AROUCA: VIOLETA SANTOS—REUTERS; KHOVSGOL: TAYLOR WEIDMAN—LIGHTROCKET/GETTY IMAGES; LIJIANG: MARIO WEIGT—ANZENBERGER/REDUX

Arouca, Portugal

Bridging the gap

With its white churches and tiled town square, Arouca, a Portuguese town an hour south of Porto, was already noted for its beauty. Now, thanks to the debut of **516 Arouca**, the world's longest pedestrian suspension bridge, Arouca is receiving global attention for its engineering. Made from steel cables, the 1,693-ft.-long structure is suspended 574 ft. above the **Paiva River**, a popular spot for rafting, and takes around 10 minutes to cross. The newly opened attraction can be found in **Arouca Geopark**, part of UNESCO's European Geoparks Network and known for its nature tourism and extreme-sports activities. The park also boasts a steep and zigzagging 5.1-mile-long wooden walking path; Roman and medieval ruins; and the **Monastery of Arouca**, one of the country's largest granite buildings.

—Tamara Hardingham-Gill



Lijiang, China

A launch point for adventure

With its ancient cobbled lanes and overlapping waterways, the Lijiang Old Town in Yunnan province, named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997, has long been a popular escape destination for China's city dwellers. The smoky flavors of dishes from the country's Naxi minority are popular with visitors, as is the selection of craft beers and cocktails in the charming pub **Stone the Crows**. And several new luxury hotels work to highlight the region's natural beauty. Among them: **Hylla Vintage Hotel** and **Cloud Nature Experience Center**, whose undulating, walkable roof mimics the rolling hills behind it; and **Hilton Lijiang**, which has its own hanging garden. Lijiang is also the main access point for **Tiger Leaping Gorge**—a spectacular hiking trail tracing the Jinsha River—which just reopened after a half-year closure for renovations.

—Charlie Campbell

Desaru Coast, Malaysia

A beach escape

The saying “If you build it, they will come” is very true of Desaru Coast, an ambitious new resort area in the state of Johor. Spanning more than 3,900 acres along a pristine 17-km stretch of beachfront real estate, the area offers some of Malaysia's most coveted luxury bolt-holes. In 2020, the **One&Only Desaru Coast**, the brand's first property in Asia, debuted as a spectacular tropical sanctuary with a spa and golf course. Also newly opened is the **Anantara Desaru Coast Resort and Villas**, with lush gardens and lagoon swimming pools. Other draws include championship golf courses and cruises through the **Sedili Wetlands**, a freshwater swamp home to the endangered water trumpet. The imminent opening of the **Desaru Coast Ferry Terminal** will offer increased transit options for Singapore and Indonesia.

—Duncan Forgan

VIRGIN GORDA, BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

Respite and renewal

After being hit by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, the British Virgin Islands are on the mend. And nowhere in the territory's approximately 60 islands and cays is the recovery more noticeable than in the North Sound on the northern coast of Virgin Gorda, home to several iconic island resorts. The Gorda Corridor sees the return of classic retreats including **Rosewood Little Dix Bay**, a family-friendly resort that offers seclusion along a mile-long beach, after a four-year closure and a multimillion-dollar renovation. **Saba Rock**, a small island (and beloved watering hole for boaters) that was previously closed because of hurricane damage, has been fully renovated and reopens in the fall as a nine-suite private resort. And neighboring **Bitter End Yacht Club**, also in the midst of rebuilding, plans to unveil a clutch of bungalows and a restaurant and bar by year's end, signaling, one hopes, a sweet start to 2022.

—Sarah Greaves-Gabbadon

PHU QUOC, VIETNAM

Idyllic paradise

Known as the “jewel of Vietnam,” this teardrop-shaped resort and fishing island has become one of the fastest-growing destinations in Southeast Asia: in 2019, Phu Quoc attracted 5 million visitors, a 30% increase from the year before. It's expected to reopen to vaccinated international travelers in the fall, and continues to entice tourists with visa-free stays for up to 30 days. Lodging options abound: earlier this year, the expansive, 375-villa **New World Phu Quoc Resort**, which boasts a private stretch of beach and lush landscaped gardens, made its debut, as did the \$2.8 billion **Phu Quoc United Center**, a massive entertainment complex featuring a theme park, golf course and casino—in addition to a series of hotels. Nearby, the **Regent Phu Quoc**, a new ultra-luxury hotel with five swimming pools and floor-to-ceiling beach-facing windows, is expected to welcome its first guests by December.

—Dan Q. Dao



DENVER

Rocky Mountain high

With the dramatic peaks of the southern Rockies to its west, action-packed Denver is one of the best cities in the U.S. to grab a local craft beer or watch some baseball—this year it hosted the MLB All-Star Game. A pregame stop at **The Beer Spa** that opened in February—where customers can sip a beer while soaking in a bath infused with hops, barley and herbs—is practically a prerequisite. The city also hosts a flourishing food scene, and plenty of hotels are slated to launch this year, including **Hyatt's Thompson Denver** in the center of town and the swanky **Clayton Members Club & Hotel** in Cherry Creek. Canadian train-touring company **Rocky Mountaineer's new Rockies to Red Rocks** route will offer a picturesque way to get to town—and to experience the stunning mountains between Moab, Utah, and Denver on a two-day luxury rail journey. It also serves as a prompt to venture outside the city to Red Rocks' jaw-dropping outdoor amphitheater for a concert with a view. —Stacey Lastoe

WADI DANA, JORDAN

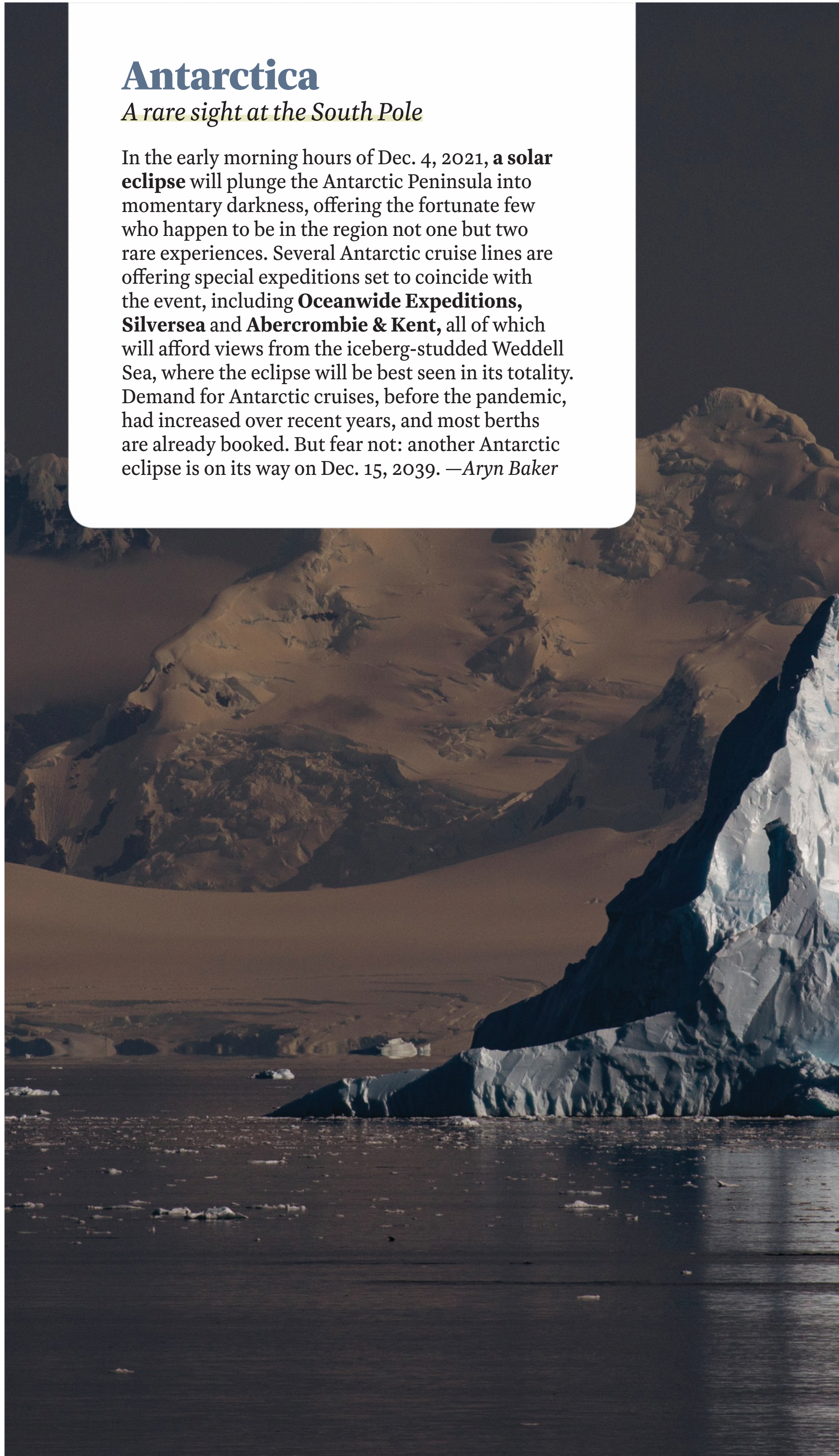
Eyes in the sky

Nestled in the remote Wadi Dana valley, the **Dana Biosphere Reserve** is Jordan's largest nature preserve. Spanning over 120 sq. mi. of four distinct biogeographical zones, the reserve is home to rare regional flora and fauna including 25 protected endangered animal species, like the Syrian wolf and the spiny-tailed lizard. In March—to better protect the expansive area and the animals that inhabit it—conservation experts launched drones to survey the region to help curb poaching and carry out surveys of the mountainous area. Wadi Dana is also at the forefront of ecotourism initiatives like the award-winning **Feynan Ecolodge**, a solar-powered guesthouse that employs staff from local Bedouin families. —Yulia Denisyuk

Antarctica

A rare sight at the South Pole

In the early morning hours of Dec. 4, 2021, a **solar eclipse** will plunge the Antarctic Peninsula into momentary darkness, offering the fortunate few who happen to be in the region not one but two rare experiences. Several Antarctic cruise lines are offering special expeditions set to coincide with the event, including **Oceanwide Expeditions**, **Silversea** and **Abercrombie & Kent**, all of which will afford views from the iceberg-studded Weddell Sea, where the eclipse will be best seen in its totality. Demand for Antarctic cruises, before the pandemic, had increased over recent years, and most berths are already booked. But fear not: another Antarctic eclipse is on its way on Dec. 15, 2039. —Aryn Baker





An iceberg
along the
Antarctic
Peninsula

GOLD COAST, AUSTRALIA

Surfers' playground

Australia's sixth largest city, Gold Coast, hugs the country's eastern shore: think perennially warm water, some of the world's best surf and a reputation for glitz and glamour. Its trendiness continues this year with many additions. In Palm Beach, **The Mysa Motel** is a newly opened (and nearly 100% solar-powered) seven-room property, bursting with retro upcycled details like vintage breeze blocks. For those in search of responsible pampering, **Gwinganna**, the luxurious health retreat co-owned by Hugh Jackman, offers wellness seminars and organic food, and was voted World's Best Eco Spa at the World Spa Awards last year. The city's cultural credentials are also getting a serious upgrade: the **HOTA Home of the Arts** precinct has reopened after a redevelopment and now boasts a \$46 million gallery alongside its outdoor stage, two cinemas, a rooftop bar, parklands and a swimming lagoon.

—Melissa Fagan



TUSCANY, ITALY

Uffizi on tour

Much of Tuscany's appeal is its timelessness, so when something innovative happens, like 2021's **Uffizi Diffusi** (Scattered Uffizi) project, take note. The brainchild of director Eike Schmidt, the idea is to disperse Renaissance works, along with visitors who would typically flock to Florence, to some of the region's ancient towns, beginning with the hilltop villages of Poppi and San Godenzo. Meanwhile, Tuscany's famous thermal waters will get new attention with the summer reopening of the **Grotta Giusti Thermal Spa Resort** (now a Marriott property) just outside Monsummano Terme, and the opening of the **Sense Experience Resort** in the southern coastal Maremma area, surrounded by just over 12 acres of private park and pine forest and providing access to a private beach. —Julia Buckley

ORLANDO

The magic continues

In October, **Walt Disney World**, the crown jewel of American theme parks, will begin an 18-month celebration of its 50th anniversary, debuting several attractions and activities. Scurry through a larger-than-life Parisian kitchen on the new **Remy's Ratatouille Adventure** ride, or take in Epcot's forthcoming **Harmonious waterfront spectacular**, a dynamic show incorporating music, fountains and pyrotechnics. Thrills abound at neighboring parks as well, with a new **Jurassic World-themed VelociCoaster** boasting a 140-ft. drop and zero-gravity stall—in which the track rotates 360 degrees above the surface of a lagoon—at Universal's **Islands of Adventure**. Other attractions, including SeaWorld Orlando's tundra-themed **Ice Breaker** and a drop tower at **ICON Park**—the world's tallest, at 430 ft.—are slated to open by year's end. Among the newest lodging options: the **AC Hotel by Marriott Orlando**, and the 349-room **Walt Disney World Swan Reserve**. —*Carlye Wisel*

NORTH GOA, INDIA

Dressed up on the coast

Although perhaps best known as a laid-back beach destination, the western Indian state of Goa is soon to make a sartorial splash. The **Moda Goa Museum and Research Centre**—a longtime passion project of one of India's most famous fashion designers, the late Wendell Rodricks—is due to open in October in Rodricks' historic Colvale home. The museum will feature 18 galleries housing more than 800 pieces and cultural artifacts from the designer's personal collection, including the swimsuit worn by 1966 Miss World Reita Faria and gold jewelry dating from the 1600s. Other additions to vibrant North Goa include **MansionHaus**, a nine-suite boutique hotel and private members' club that opened this year in a 19th century villa in Anjuna, and the upcoming **King's Mansion** in Candolim, a luxury hotel and seaside spa that pledges to incorporate traditional Ayurvedic medicine into wellness treatments that are personalized with the help of genetic analysis. —*Sarah Khan*



Loire Valley, France

Chez Leonardo

Between its beautiful castles and royal residences, the Loire Valley has long been a treasure trove of history. Now **Château du Clos Lucé (above)**, the final home of Leonardo da Vinci, has a new pièce de résistance: a 5,380-sq.-ft. cultural center and museum featuring an innovative exhibit that projects 17 legendary Leonardo works, including *The Last Supper*, onto the walls and ceiling of the ground-floor gallery and 3-D animations highlighting some of his inventions. The

past comes to life at the 15th century **Château d'Ainay-le-Vieil**, one of the best-preserved fortresses from that time, which now offers accommodations in farmhouses on its grounds. Other additions in the area include the **Loire Valley Lodges**, where visitors can stay in luxury treehouses, and the opening of **La Maison Tatin**, a hotel in the 19th century residence where the Tatin sisters created the upside-down French pastry by accident. —*Michelle Tchea*

José Ignacio, Uruguay

Relaxed getaway

A shimmy up the Atlantic coastline from Montevideo, José Ignacio is uncrowded and unbuttoned. In time for the 2021 summer season, **Posada LUZ**, a country retreat with olive groves, a miniforest, a vineyard and an infinity pool, is set for a November opening. One of **James Turrell's Skyspace installations**—large, enclosed chambers with apertures in the ceilings that open up to the sky—is coming in November to nearby Posada Ayana, his first freestanding work in South America. There are new beachside bungalows at **Bahia Vik** with individual suites featuring oversize art and a pool set among sand dunes, plus the wood-clad bookstore-gallery-hotel **Rizoma**. The area's restaurant of choice is **La Huella**, which sits in the dunes, serving freshly grilled seafood. The nearby bar **Solera** offers a choice of no fewer than 350 wines, many local. —*Julia Buckley*

Tallinn, Estonia

Cruising and perusing

Thirty years after declaring its independence from the Soviet Union, Estonia has emerged as one of the world's leading digital economies, home to companies such as Skype and Wise. And its capital, Tallinn, with a medieval city center and a NATO cybersecurity center, embraces modernity while celebrating its history.

A solar-powered cruise terminal at the Port of Tallinn is scheduled to open in July, just in time for the resumption of Baltic cruising: from July through September, the *MSC Seaview* will make port in Tallinn. In less high-tech attractions, the city is encouraging a shift to **walking tours for shore excursions** (reducing the number of buses shuttling passengers from the port to the old city). Elsewhere, a new **long-distance hiking route** connects Tallinn to Estonia's southern neighbors Latvia and Lithuania through a 1,330-mile cross-border Forest Trail.

—Yulia Denisyuk

BANGKOK

Perpetual motion

Bangkok has always been known for its hustle and bustle. Soon the Thai capital will boast Southeast Asia's largest railway terminal as well. In November, **Bang Sue Grand Station**, containing 26 platforms over four floors, is expected to open, shuttling passengers all over the country and the wider region. Replacing the iconic Hua Lamphong station's former hub—which will become a railway museum—the new station will support intercity, underground, commuter and high-speed services. Two luxury hotels have also opened on Bangkok's riverfront: Andy Miller and Richard Scott Wilson's playful **Capella Bangkok**, where each room and suite has a river view, and the **Four Seasons Hotel Bangkok at Chao Phraya River**, which offers open-air terraces, pools and a lobby art-exhibition space. Recent restaurant openings include **Aksorn**—by legendary chef David Thompson, who creates dishes from vintage Thai cookbooks—and **Charmgang**, which opened before the pandemic shutdown, known for its curry. —Duncan Forgan

QUITO, ECUADOR

Heritage hub

Ecuador's stunning capital city is also a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**, its **Colonial Center** bursting with examples of 16th to 18th century architecture and design. But there are plenty of new reasons to visit Quito: **Zingaro**, a restaurant and gastronomic hub where rotating chefs provide casual takes on both regional dishes and world food, cocktails and beer, recently opened in the La Vicentina neighborhood. The **Casa Anabela Hotel Boutique** offers 11 rooms in a renovated, and strikingly pink, late 19th century building. And the elegant **Casa Gangotena**, a Relais & Châteaux hotel in the historic center of Quito, just opened its first spa. (Go for the signature Chuspa Andina massage, which utilizes pouches full of warm Andean herbs.) Quito is also a great jumping-off point to explore all manner of natural wonders, including volcanoes, hot springs and national parks—all of which have been made more accessible with the launch of two convenient tourist-bus services: **Wanderbus Ecuador** supplies guided set itineraries, and **Ecuador Hop** offers open-ended hop-on-hop-off options. —Karen Catchpole



OSAKA, JAPAN

Vivid fun

With its neon billboards, forward-thinking architecture and plentiful entertainment options, Osaka is bursting with youthful energy. For the design-savvy, the first **W Hotel** in Japan opened in Osaka this year, with a black monolith facade and vibrant interiors designed by Osaka's own Pritzker Prize-winning architect Tadao Ando. Another much lauded (and colorful) opening: the world's first **Super Nintendo World**, an addition to Universal Studios Japan. The themed area's whimsical attractions—including question blocks that you hit to collect coins—make you feel as if you're inside a game. Get energized on a cute Super Mushroom pizza bowl, then take off on the multilevel augmented-reality Mario Kart ride. —La Carmina

Gothenburg, Sweden

Four centuries and counting

This year, the city of Gothenburg will mark its 400th anniversary with a series of events and exhibits. The main installation from the **Museum of Gothenburg**, *Gothenburg Stories*, includes interviews with a cross section of 100 locals about life in Gothenburg, and is on display in a public square through September. In keeping with its eco-centric ethos, the city is expanding **Jubileumsparken (Centenary Park)**—a waterfront area that includes a playground and a heated pool—and the new **Hisingsbron Bridge**, which has a midsection that lifts to accommodate river traffic, allows residents to bike and walk over the **Gota Älv**. More than a dozen new restaurants and bars have also opened over the past year, including **Monopolet**, with its five-course street-food menu, and **Dugges Pils**, a beer bar that serves everything from jackfruit tacos to wings with Korean ketchup. —M.T.



BEIJING

Action-packed metropolis

Squeezing the bustling Chinese capital into a long weekend just became a lot tougher. Apart from the obligatory tour of the **Ming Dynasty Forbidden City**, abode of emperors, there's clambering up the **Great Wall** and taking in an evening of **Peking opera**. But that was all before this summer's opening of **Beijing Universal Studios**. Along with a slew of cinematic attractions including the Transformers-themed **Decepticoaster**, the park also boasts new high-end hotels such as the **Universal Studios Grand Hotel**, which has movie-inspired interiors, and the **Nuo Resort Hotel**, featuring greenery inspired by ancient royal gardens. What's more, the fast-approaching **2022 Beijing Winter Olympics** have brought a new high-speed rail link that puts Nanshan ski resort's 25 trails and snowboard theme park within 40 minutes of downtown.

—Charlie Campbell



LAS VEGAS

Excess and innovation

New casinos, new restaurants and an Elon Musk–developed tunnel system are among the exciting developments that are part and parcel of Las Vegas' post-pandemic rebound. A major addition to the city's casinos is **Resorts World Las Vegas**, which opened in late June and comprises three hotels, a hawker-style food court and the theater hosting Carrie Underwood's residency. In Vegas' west suburbs, **Al Solito Posto** is a newly debuted upscale-but-old-school Italian joint that serves elevated iterations of eggplant and chicken parmigiana, lasagna and, for dessert, pie-size rainbow cookies. But—despite the fanfare for other openings—it's Musk's innovation that is receiving the most attention. The 1.7-mile tunnel—the brainchild of Musk's **Boring Co.**—opened in June to transport visitors between facilities at the city's sprawling **Convention Center**. The chariots: Teslas, of course. —Matt Villano



Faroe Islands, Denmark

Worth the journey

The Faroe Islands, the remote Danish archipelago positioned in the Atlantic about halfway between Iceland and Scotland, has seen tourism double over the past five years. Getting to or navigating the islands hasn't always been easy, but visitors have flocked nonetheless to their windswept craggy coasts, multicolored cottages and colonies of puffins. Now, the **Eysturoy tunnel**—a landmark addition to the underwater highway complex connecting the archipelago—links the cosmopolitan capital of Torshavn with the second most populous island. This marvel of engineering contains **the world's first undersea roundabout**, with an illuminated, sea blue central pillar decorated by Faroese artist Trondur Patursson. More inbound air-travel options are on the horizon with the resumption of flights to and from Edinburgh. —Brad Japhe

Sarasota, Fla.

The growing Gulf Coast scene

Miami has long held the reins on all things young and hip in Florida. But there's something special percolating along the once sleepy Gulf Coast these days. Celebrating its centennial this year, Sarasota is proving itself a vital cultural capital with the new **Sarasota Art Museum of Ringling College**, housed in the former Sarasota High School building, with exhibitions featuring the work of artists such as Robert Colescott, Charles McGill and Sam Davis. Phase 1 of **The Bay**, a project that will redevelop 53 acres of city land into a bayfront public park, is set to debut this year, including the meandering **Mangrove Bayou Walkway**, which opened in April, and the **Sunset Boardwalk**. And across the John Ringling Causeway, two upscale beachfront properties recently unveiled major renovations: **Lido Beach Pavilion** and **The Resort at Longboat Key Club**, both superior spots to watch the sun set over the shimmering Gulf waters. —B.J.



FAROE: DENIS MEYER—HANS LUCAS/REDUX; SARASOTA: PETER FISHER; BENGUERRA: COURTESY ELISA YOUNG



Kisawa
Sanctuary's
wellness center
and gym on
Benguerra Island

Benguerra Island, Mozambique

Supercharged eco-luxury

The second largest island of Mozambique's Bazaruto Archipelago remains a low-key idyllic drop in the Indian Ocean—the island sits within a national marine reserve. It is about to see its tourist profile rise with the opening of the **Kisawa Sanctuary**, the world's first 3-D-printed resort built with sand and seawater mortar. The ultra-exclusive 12-bungalow resort is a beautiful base from which to explore Benguerra Island's flamingo beaches and pristine coral reefs, where dugongs, manta rays and tiger sharks dwell, with minimal human interaction. This one-of-a-kind experience comes with a hefty price tag, though: nightly rates for bungalows start at almost \$6,000 and include a butler, meals crafted by private chefs, a sunset sail and a massage. —*Travis Levius*

DUBAI

Bringing the world together

After a year's delay because of the pandemic, **Expo 2020**, a multibillion-dollar six-month fair expected to draw 25 million visitors, will make its long-awaited debut in Dubai this October. Almost 200 pavilions created by countries around the world will showcase their respective cultures and achievements. (Italy's exhibition, for example, will feature a 3-D-printed replica of Michelangelo's *David*, and Singapore will emphasize the country's commitment to sustainability with lush indoor hanging gardens.) Elsewhere, the otherworldly **Museum of the Future**, an exhibition space housed within a ringlike steel edifice aglow with Arabic calligraphy, nears completion. Thrill seekers will love Ain Dubai, the world's tallest Ferris wheel, and the new *John Wick* roller coaster at the Hollywood-inspired theme park **Motiongate Dubai**. New luxury hotels like **SLS Dubai**, which boasts infinity pools on the top of the 75-story tower, and **St. Regis Dubai, the Palm**—connected from the man-made island it is located on to the city's sights via its own monorail station—provide a break from the action. And the 795-room **Atlantis, The Royal** will open later this year, with restaurants from celebrity chefs Ariana Bundy and José Andrés. —*Sarah Khan*

KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

Artisanal escape

With surfable beaches and world-heritage-class parklands, the province of KwaZulu-Natal, located on South Africa's Western Cape, is eye-poppingly beautiful. KZN, as it's known, has a warm but mild climate, which is perhaps why **Club Med**, the popular purveyor of all-inclusive vacations, is planning its first South African resort on the Dolphin Coast, not far outside Durban, KZN's biggest city. Other fun new attractions include Durban's **+258**, a Mozambican restaurant and cultural center, and an hour away, in the KZN midlands, **The Old Mushroom Farm**, a former farm with work spaces for artisans and self-catering accommodation. —*Belinda Luscombe*

SYDNEY

Harborside stunners

Sydney's already iconic skyline has welcomed several new additions—most notably a glittering, silver 890-ft. skyscraper that is now the tallest in Australia's most populous city. **Crown Sydney** (and its five-star hotel) opened in December, capping the multibillion-dollar redevelopment of the city's former docklands, a precinct now known as Barangaroo, which includes apartments, restaurants and bars, and a waterfront path and nature reserve. Elsewhere, the University of Sydney opened the **Chau Chak Wing Museum**, a boxy concrete structure featuring exhibitions on art, science, history and ancient cultures. These new additions join some of Sydney's more avant-garde architectural offerings, including Darling Square's unique **Exchange building**, wrapped in circular softwood ribbons by architect Kengo Kuma, and **Frank Gehry's "crumpled paper bag"**: a curvy brick university edifice that overlooks the Goods Line, a former rail line turned public greenway. —*Katrina Lobley*



BODRUM, TURKEY

Riviera on the rise

The seaside city of Bodrum has reinvented itself several times over the past few decades—from a quiet fishing village to a popular resort town to a glamorous hot spot, often called the St. Tropez of Turkey. (Look no further than its **superyacht marina**, which reportedly draws billionaires like Bill Gates and Roman Abramovich.) It's no wonder, then, that it's welcoming a slew of luxe new lodging options, including the **Bodrum Loft**, an eco-friendly community of villas; the **METT Hotel & Beach Resort Bodrum**, a five-star waterside resort; and the **Radisson Collection Hotel, Bodrum**, with its own private beach. Last year also saw the reopening of **Bodrum Castle**, a 600-year-old medieval fortification, which had been closed for restoration since 2017. —*Tamara Hardingham-Gill*

An onsen-style soaking tub at the Higashiyama Niseko Village, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve on the island of Hokkaido





Hokkaido, Japan

Northern exposure

The northernmost Japanese island of Hokkaido is one of the archipelago's largest, least populous and most magical. Following the opening of the **Ritz-Carlton Reserve** in Niseko late last year, new hotels like the **Hoshino Resorts Kai Poroto** and **Aman Niseko** are slated to follow suit in the next two years, catering to an increasing number of winter-sports enthusiasts. But there are attractions for culture and history buffs too. The recently opened **Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park**, dedicated to the local Indigenous Ainu people, features exhibitions and traditional performances. Although the region continues to grow as an outdoor winter playground for skiing and snowboarding, more warm-weather adventures are popping up: **the first treetop trekking facility** in eastern Hokkaido opened last year, while a new 140-km circuit looping around Sapporo is in the works.

—Michelle Tchea

SÃO VICENTE, CAPE VERDE

Music in the air

The West African island of São Vicente, Cape Verde, has vibrant musical and cultural scenes, which with the opening of the new **Floating Music Hub** now extend to the bay of Mindelo, its capital city. This project from architect and designer Kunlé Adeyemi consists of three separate but linked timber pavilions: a recording studio; a bar; and a multiuse performance space to spotlight African music, dance and art. It's an idyllic venue to experience live performances of the Cape Verdean *morna*, a genre made famous by the late Cesária Évora, a legendary singer for whom Mindelo's airport is named. While São Vicente is small, it is also one of Africa's fastest growing economies, thanks in part to its burgeoning tourism sector. Among the lodging options in the pipeline: the beachfront **Meliá Salamansa**, featuring a spa with six swimming pools, as well as 16 new rental lodges from **Barefoot Luxury**, featuring Scandinavian design combined with locally sourced African handcrafted furniture.

—Dorine Reinstein

NORTHLAND, NEW ZEALAND

Legendary experiences

New Zealand's northernmost region is its fastest growing in terms of population. But regardless of whether visitors are there to stay—or to stay for the night—a host of new offerings are sure to delight. The geothermal and hot-spring complex of **Ngawha Springs** reopened this year after refurbishment, as did **Te Ahurea**, a re-created Maori village featuring workshops on traditional handicrafts. Meanwhile, on the shores of **Hokianga Harbour**, **Manea Footprints of Kupe** is a new cultural center and guided exhibition that tells the story of Kupe, a mythical explorer who is reputed to have originally discovered New Zealand, through performance, film and large-scale artworks. Off the east coast, the **Poor Knights Islands** are home to some of the world's best diving and Rikoriko, the world's largest sea cave.

—Ali Wunderman



BELIZE

Striking a delicate balance

Belize takes protecting its pristine environment seriously. In 2021, an environmental coalition purchased 236,000 acres of the **Belize Maya Forest**, protecting 9% of the Central American country's landmass—as well as the spider monkeys, jaguars and ocelots that call the forest home. But as the economy recovers—having been pummeled by both natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic—striking a balance between conserving the nation's natural environs and increasing tourism revenues will be crucial. Belize is setting the stage for more visitors with the recent opening of the new **Alaia Belize, Autograph Collection**, Marriott International's first resort in the country. Meanwhile, airlines, including United and Alaska, are expanding their route offerings to help accommodate future influxes of tourists. Two new options for private stays near nature are the beachfront villas at the **Itz'ana Resort & Residences** and **Valley Stream**, a new ultra-remote private residence situated within 200 acres of lush rain forest.

—Ali Wunderman

NEW RIVER GORGE NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE, WEST VIRGINIA

Active nature

West Virginia's New River Gorge, encompassing more than 70,000 acres, became the country's newest national park and preserve in December. The main artery of the park is **New River**, which—despite its moniker—is one of the oldest rivers in the world, with 53 miles of free-flowing white water. Towering above the river is **New River Gorge Bridge**, which hosts its annual BASE jumping “Bridge Day” in October—making this the only national park where that daredevil activity is legal. Climbers come for the sandstone cliffs, some 1,200 ft. high, with 1,400 climbing routes, and there are also more than 21 miles for mountain biking.

—Aniesia Williams



Cannes, France

Sea and be seen

This iconic location on the French Riviera is accustomed to the limelight. But as Cannes emerges from pandemic shutdown, the tiny town is honoring its own inhabitants. Submerged up to 5 m below the sea, about a 15-minute ferry ride from Cannes off the coast of Île Ste.-Marguerite, the newly minted **Underwater Eco-Museum** (*above*) features a series of towering sculptures of local residents, including a 7-year-old student and an elderly fisherman. Each is chiseled out of environmentally friendly materials by British underwater artist Jason deCaires Taylor. The return of the in-person **Cannes Film Festival** in July brought all manner of A-listers to **La Croisette**, Cannes' main boulevard, though the place to stay is **Hôtel du Cap-Eden-Roc**, in nearby Antibes, which is on its 151st season. And in the fall, look out for the new **Hôtel Belle Plage**, an eco-conscious, wellness-oriented boutique property from the team behind Paris' trendy **Hôtel National des Arts et Métiers**. —Chrissie McClatchie

MENDOZA, ARGENTINA

Serving culinary excellence outdoors

Mendoza is a laid-back agricultural province in Argentina where wine flows and outdoor dining is a must. In the surrounding wine region (the most famous in the country), **Casa de Uco Vineyards & Wine Resort** stands by its own lagoon and offers an epic traditional asado—or barbecue—in the vines. Downtown, the recently opened **La Central Vermutería** imports the classic vermouth-bar tradition (vermouth on tap, small plates, convivial vibe) from Buenos Aires. Nearby, the pared-down and thoughtful **Ramos Generales** is one of only nine restaurants in the world run by Argentine culinary icon Francis Mallmann. And at **Gaia Restaurant**, a local chef turns out six-course set meals with ingredients from the restaurant's organic garden. For a culinary-inspired souvenir, pick up some handcrafted cutlery (found on the tables of many top restaurants) from **KDS Knives**. —Karen Catchpole



NUUK, GREENLAND

Pioneering capital

Big things are happening in one of the world's smallest capitals. The Arctic city of Nuuk, with some 18,000 residents, is poised to become **the world's first certified "sustainable capital"** by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, which sets internationally recognized environmental-protection standards in tourism. **A new coastal path** highlights the city's deep connection with nature: Phase 1 is now open, featuring wooden footbridges that skirt the picturesque mountainside. In the coming years, Phase 2 will highlight national heritage sites like the Herrnhut ruins. There are **plentiful viewing platforms to absorb the scenic splendor**, and Nuuk takes advantage of low light pollution: northern-lights sailing trips allow visitors to view the aurora in true Greenlandic fashion, making a solid case for a future spot on the International Dark-Sky Association list. —*Lauren Breedlove*



Island of Hawaii

Volcanoes and vistas

Nicknamed the Big Island, the vast Island of Hawaii has made use of the pause in visitors to rethink and reset the direction of tourism—and better protect its natural beauty. The statewide “Malama Hawaii” initiative encourages visitors to connect with the land in more restorative ways: among other efforts, hotels are partnering with local nonprofits to offer activities such as planting a koa sapling and participating in beach cleaning. Elsewhere on the island, **Volcanoes National Park (left)** is undergoing a recovery project to repair damage from the 2018 eruption of the Kilauea volcano. Plans include a redesign of its visitor center to better manage the overcrowding that has plagued the park in previous years. And on the Kohala coast, the **Four Seasons Resort Hualalai** is showing off its multimillion-dollar pandemic refurbishment, with updated guest rooms and villa expansions, as well as a new 1.8 million-gallon swimmable aquarium: the **Kumu Kai Marine Center** at King's Pond. —*Diandra Barnwell*

Jaipur, India

Astronomical haven

India's “Pink City” was already a famed tourist destination, known for its salmon-hued palaces, colorful festivals and intricate craftwork. But this year, in a bid to boost tourism, Jaipur launched the **“Night Sky Tourism” initiative**, which provides visitors free access to telescopes to view stars, planets and other celestial bodies. At the heart of this venture is **Jantar Mantar**, an astronomical observatory and UNESCO World Heritage Site that houses the world's largest stone sundial. There are also new luxe lodging options from hospitality group Leela Palaces, whose **Leela Palace Jaipur** features private plunge pools and personal butlers, and Six Senses, which is set to open a wellness center and resort in **Fort Barwara**, a refurbished 14th century fortification.

—*Abhishyant Kidangoor*

HO CHI MINH CITY

Tastes of Vietnam

Ho Chi Minh City's incredible food has never been short of admirers. Even so, it felt like a watershed moment when **Anan**—helmed by Vietnamese-American chef Peter Cuong Franklin—became the first venue in the country's southern hub to earn a berth in **Asia's 50 Best Restaurants**. Franklin's inspired take on classics like pho and banh chung is indicative of the culinary creativity at play in the city. Notable recent additions to the local dining scene include **Monkey Gallery**, where chef Viet Hong merges Vietnamese, French and Japanese techniques and flavors, and **Esta**, a self-described “modern Asian eatery” with an ever changing, expansive menu that runs the gamut from smoked-eel pâté to veal sweetbreads. Both inspiring and delicious is **Ivoire**, a bakery that specializes in picture-perfect Vietnamese interpretations of classic French pastries, including small cakes and macarons. —*Duncan Forgan*

LOS ANGELES

Hollywood's next act

Anchored by the **Academy Museum of Motion Pictures**, opening this September with programming curated by filmmakers Spike Lee and Pedro Almodóvar, Los Angeles is starring in its own comeback story. Leading the post-pandemic revival of cultural gathering spaces is the **Citizen Public Market** (a food hall in Culver City with a leafy rooftop patio space) and an in-the-works 13,000-sq.-ft. brewery and tasting room by the Black-owned **South Los Angeles Beverage Company**. Downtown L.A. continues to thrive with the arrival of restaurants like **Damian**, a modern Mexican eatery from chef Enrique Olvera of Mexico City's Pujol, and its companion backdoor taqueria **Ditroit**, which churns out fresh tortillas at a clip of over 500 per day. Then there's **Proper Hotel's** latest, 148-room outpost, infused with the neutral tones of Kelly Wearstler's warm and homey design aesthetic. Sprawling luxury reigns in nearby Beverly Hills at **Fairmont Century Plaza**, which recently received a \$2.5 billion refresh complete with Yabu Pushelberg-designed interiors and one of L.A.'s largest spas, at 14,000 sq. ft. —*Julia Eskins*



LA PAZ, MEXICO

Laid-back vibes at the seaside

The Mexican seaside city of La Paz is two hours north of the popular Cabo San Lucas and its busy resorts, but with its laid-back vibe, it might as well be a world away. Visitors can take a relaxed stroll on the **malecón**, a three-mile-long pedestrian walkway right along the Sea of Cortez, lined with ocean-inspired sculptures and open-air cafés. The newly opened **Baja Club Hotel**, by boutique Mexico City developer Grupo Habita, occupies a colonial-era former private mansion. Epic marine-life encounters are the main draw to La Paz and its surrounds—these are the waters Jacques Cousteau referred to as “the world’s aquarium”—and there are plenty of boat excursions to choose from. On uninhabited **Espíritu Santo Island**, just offshore, the glorious **Camp Cecil de la Isla** has luxe canvas tents with a canopy of stars overhead. With new American Airlines direct flights from Dallas and Phoenix, La Paz is primed to welcome many more guests this year. —Terry Ward

SANTA FE, N.M.

Monument to the Southwest

Santa Fe is steeped in history. This year, it welcomed the arrival of **Bishop’s Lodge**, an Auberge Resorts Collection retreat nestled near the Santa Fe National Forest. A chapel built in 1874 by the first Archbishop of Santa Fe stands at the center of this luxury resort and ranch, where guests can take horses on guided trail rides. In keeping with the Southwestern spirit, the **Santa Fe Railyard**, a cultural hub that offers commuter train service, leisure activities and an outdoor rail trail, is now home to a new outpost of **Bosque Brewing Company** as well as the **Opuntia Café**, which has an indoor garden and a selection of seasonal bowls and toasts. Elsewhere, a pandemic surge in bikers inspired volunteers from the Santa Fe Fat Tire Society to build a five-mile loop at **Galisteo Basin Preserve**.

—Sucheta Rawal



Lake Kivu, Rwanda

Solar-powered exploration

Rwanda’s already impressive array of unique, eco-friendly and luxurious tourism experiences is about to add another extraordinary stay to its roster. The **Mantis Kivu Queen uBuranga floating hotel**, scheduled to open by the end of the year, is a 10-cabin, solar-powered yacht—the first of its kind in the country. This unique luxury experience includes an onboard swimming pool and offers three-day cruises along Lake Kivu (above), a rift-valley lake famous for its clear waters and stunning forests. Boat passengers can continue their exploration of Rwanda’s rich wildlife with a stay at the new **Forest of Hope Guest House and Camp** in nearby Gishwati-Mukura National Park, where tracking chimpanzees and golden monkeys goes hand in hand with tree planting as part of the local reforestation effort. —Aryn Baker

BERLIN

Readying for visitors

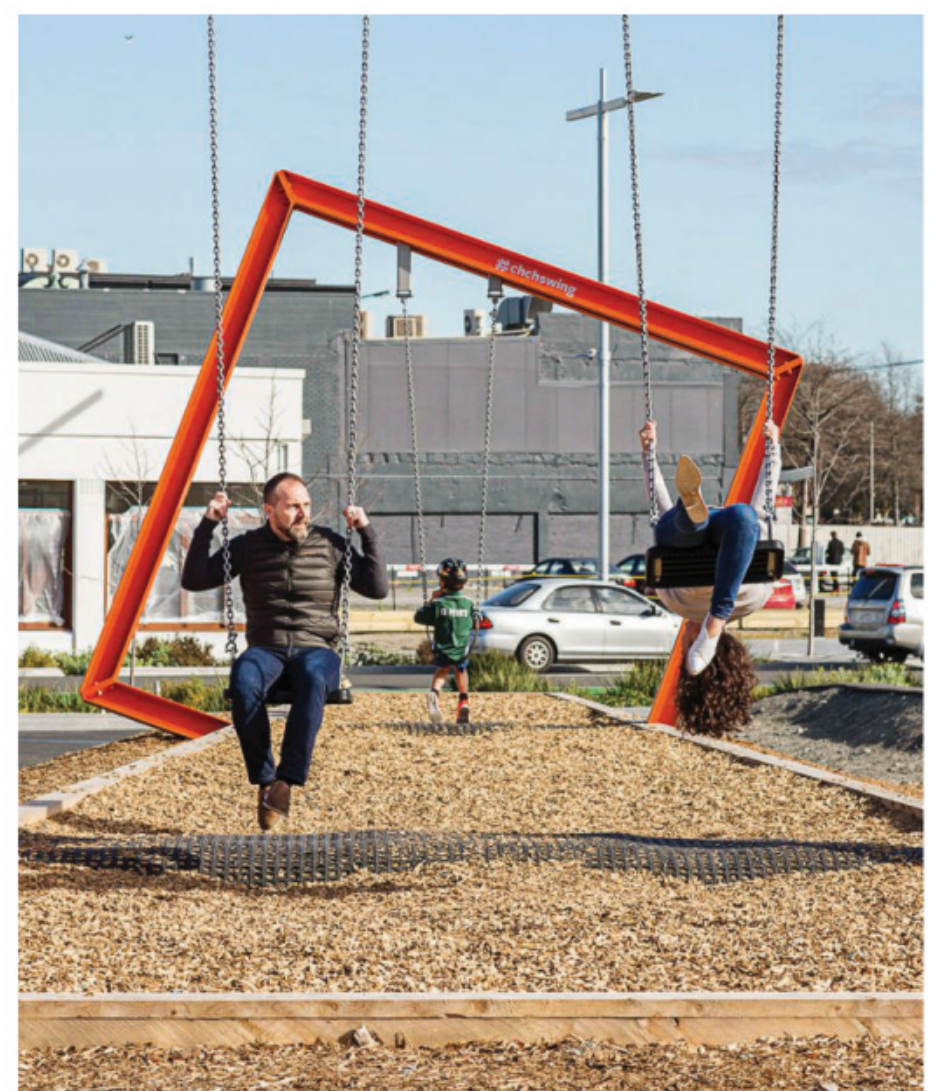
The German capital is poised to welcome back travelers. Most notable among its recent infrastructure projects: the fall 2020 opening of **Berlin Brandenburg Airport** after nearly a decade of delays, with newly added features like on-site COVID-19 testing. Visiting foodies will love digging in to the city’s on-the-rise dining scene: noteworthy newcomers include **Tante Fichte**, the latest project by Michael Köhle, featuring visually elegant dishes created from local produce, and plant-based zero-waste **Frea Bakery**. Meanwhile, several major cultural institutions are undergoing renovations along stately Museum Island, including the **Pergamon Museum**, the city’s most visited. —Blane Bachelor

Christchurch, New Zealand

Rebuilding from rubble

Ten years after a devastating earthquake razed much of the city, Christchurch is fully in recovery mode, welcoming hotel, restaurant and public-space openings almost every month. The transformation can be best viewed with a walk along the new 1.2-mile-long **Otakaro Avon River promenade**. Highlights include the **Riverside Market**, an indoor farmers’ market; the **Turanga library**, which has been rebuilt to withstand seismic activity using sustainable materials; and the \$475 million **Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre**, a curved gray brick building with a flowing interior inspired by the Avon River (set to open later in 2021). And although vacant lots remain while rebuilding continues, they are regularly filled with creative and interactive installations such as hammock forests and a coin-operated dance floor.

—Jessica Wynne Lockhart



Tokyo

Gearing up for the Games

Japan's capital city is putting on quite a show this year as it gears up for the delayed 2020 Summer Olympics. The newly renovated **Miyashita Park** opened with more than 90 boutique shops, cafés and a hotel under a glass roof overlooking the Shibuya district, as well as a skate park and volleyball courts sprawled over more than 10,000 sq m. Also new to the scene: the recently opened **Tokyo Edition, Toranomon**, a greenery-filled high-rise retreat designed by the architect of Tokyo's Olympic Stadium, Kengo Kuma, and the **BnA_Wall**, a boutique art hotel in Nihonbashi where a portion of every stay goes to the local artist who designed the room. Room themes include Kanto Iwamura's minimalist and industrial "Concrete Jungle" and Mako Watanabe's "Sushi Wars," defined by glittering walls and bright colors. —Michelle Tchea



GRENADA

Luxury on the water

It's no wonder that Grenada, one of the world's largest producers of nutmeg, cinnamon and cloves, is known as the Spice Island of the Caribbean. Its lively food scene—which features open-air markets selling fruit and vegetables and nearby vendors serving grilled fish—is well worth a visit, and new hotels and properties provide a wide array of options for travelers. The all-inclusive **Royalton Grenada Resort & Spa**, which first debuted in spring 2020, will finally reopen this October after temporarily closing its doors because of the pandemic. Also new: **The Point at Petite Calivigny**, built on rolling hills that slope toward the turquoise waters of the southern coast's Woburn Bay. Over on Grand Anse Beach, the five-star **Silversands Grenada**, one of the island's top luxury resorts, unveiled a slate of multimillion-dollar villas, offering guests an opportunity to buy the property. For a more personal private retreat, the family-owned, four-bedroom waterfront **Villa Solitaire** has sweeping views on two acres, and a daily menu that celebrates local dishes like oil down—a hearty stew of local produce including breadfruit and callaloo (a leafy green), salted meat and, of course, spice. —Kristin Braswell

NEW ORLEANS

Big Easy does it

Music, architecture, art and gastronomy are the pride of NOLA, and lodging and attractions coming this year capture and expand on that spirit. Housed in the city's former World Trade Center, the **Four Seasons Hotel and Residences** brings new life to the once shuttered riverfront landmark and will feature a fine-dining restaurant from beloved local chef Donald Link. The city's beating heart is on display with live music at **The Bar at Commons Club**, located in the Virgin Hotel in the Warehouse District, and the **One11**, the first hotel to open in the French Quarter in 50 years. Also in the Warehouse District, the new **Museum of Southern Jewish Experience** explores the rich history of Jewish people in the South. —S.R.

PHILADELPHIA

Artistic growth

A city best known for its storied past, Philadelphia is writing a new chapter this year. The **Philadelphia Museum of Art's elegant Greek Revival facade** has remained largely the same since it first opened in 1928, but the interior now offers visitors a fresh perspective with a Frank Gehry-led redesign unveiled in May. The space now includes access to a previously off-limits vaulted walkway and a stunning floating staircase to rival the iconic steps out front, made famous by *Rocky*. It has also added 20,000 sq. ft. of gallery space to include exhibitions like “**New Grit: Art & Philly Now**,” showcasing the work of 25 contemporary artists with ties to the city. The local culinary scene is as vibrant as ever too, with chef Omar Tate crowdfunding the forthcoming **Honeysuckle Community Center** in West Philly, sprouted from his award-winning dinner series of the same name that centers Black culture and history. And Ange Branca, after closing her award-winning Malaysian restaurant Saté Kampar last spring, is back with **Kampar Kitchen**, featuring meals for takeout from a rotating roster of chefs. —Regan Stephens

JASPER, ALBERTA

Canada's cabin capital

Jasper, Alberta, with more than 400 cabins, cottages and other individual lodgings, is the Great White North's self-proclaimed cabin capital and the gateway to **Jasper National Park** in the Canadian Rockies. After being closed for a two-year renovation, **Whistlers Campground**, the largest camping area in the Parks Canada system, is reopening with some major improvements, including repaved roads and new facilities at each of its 781 campsites. There are new food offerings in Jasper as well as the outdoor fun. **Jasper Food Tours'** “peak-nic” excursion combines a picturesque hike with a back-country cooking demo and picnic. And the revamped **Maligne Canyon Wilderness Kitchen** serves an array of locally smoked meats and hearty sides (like maple baked beans and mac and cheese) at the region's deepest canyon. Good thing you can walk it off. —Carolyn B. Heller

The Baobab Treehouse at Xigera Safari Lodge in the Okavango Delta in Botswana





Okavango Delta, Botswana

An oasis in the wetlands

Recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, the marshlands and flooded plains of northern Botswana's Okavango Delta are a must visit even for the most experienced African-safari goer. This year the area adds two eco-friendly, solar-powered safari lodges from which to explore its natural bounty. There's the intimate **Khwai Leadwood**, an upscale, low-impact tented camp on a community-run concession along the Khwai River banks, where guests can take helicopter tours for aerial views of the lush ecosystem and spot bathing elephant herds and prowling lions. On the fringes of the Moremi Game Reserve, art and animal sightings define the 12-suite **Xigera Safari Lodge**—an experiential “living gallery” adorned with the works of nearly 80 sub-Saharan-based designers and artisans—perched on stilts above a languid water channel. —*Travis Levius*

INDIANAPOLIS

Bottle service

Indianapolis may be a smaller city, but it's packed with standout restaurants, museums and sports centers. Its latest draw is the **Bottleworks District**, a \$300 million reimagining of the historically significant spot where a Coca-Cola bottling plant operated from 1920 to 1969. The heart of the area is the boutique **Bottleworks Hotel**, which occupies the top floors of the 1920s Coca-Cola building with faithful Art Deco design and a beautifully restored spiral staircase. Nearby, the new **Garage Food Hall** is a lively open space of over 20 local vendors, including **La Chinita Poblana**, a beloved Asian-fusion taco spot, and **Axle's Garage Tap**, with 20 craft and specialty beers on draft. Rounding out this 12-acre entertainment and hospitality complex is the **Living Room Theaters**, showing a mix of mainstream and independent art films. —*Aniesia Williams*



GYEONGJU, SOUTH KOREA

Historic gem

South Korea's “museum without walls” is an ancient wonder that keeps evolving. The city enjoyed a nearly thousand-year reign as the capital of the ancient Korean kingdom of Silla. Gyeongju's abundant archaeological sites include temple and palace ruins and nobility burial mounds. Ongoing excavation efforts are still uncovering Silla's treasures—last year's major find was a pair of 5th century gilt-bronze shoes. Late last year, the newly refreshed **Gyeongju National Museum's Silla History wing** was unveiled by acclaimed Seoul design outfit Teo Yang Studio, showcasing the area's ancient artifacts within a modern, minimalist setting. The launch of **new bullet trains**, meanwhile, will slash journey times between the city and Seoul, bringing fresh eyes to view the old capital. —*Duncan Forgan*

ST. LOUIS

A reinvigorated downtown

Known as the Gateway City, St. Louis boasts a number of noteworthy happenings in 2021, just in time for Missouri's bicentennial. On the food front, **Casa Don Alfonso**, the first stateside outpost of Michelin-star Italian restaurateur Mario Iaccarino, debuted at the **Ritz-Carlton St. Louis**, featuring traditional dishes from the Mediterranean. The mixed-use **City Foundry STL** is the area's first true food hall, serving everything from Argentine empanadas to dosas and Bombay sliders. A duo of flashy hotel openings—**Le Méridien St. Louis Downtown**, featuring an open-air pool deck, and **21c Museum Hotel St. Louis**, offering art-exhibition space in addition to its 173 rooms—are set to expand the city's hospitality options. Other ongoing transformations include the **Brickline Greenway**, connecting pedestrians and cyclists to city parks, and **Laclede's Landing**, a strip of former warehouses renovated into a trendy restaurant and nightclub district on the Mississippi riverfront. Also coming: the new **St. Louis City SC** soccer stadium will be home to the city's first MLS team when it debuts in a revitalized section of downtown, not far from the landmark Gateway Arch National Park. —Katy Spratte Joyce



SIARGAO, PHILIPPINES

Surf's up

While destinations such as Boracay, Cebu and Palawan nailed the mass market, the teardrop-shaped island off the coast of Mindanao until recently had been best known to a dedicated band of surfers lured by consistent waves. But the secret is out, and new spots are popping up on the island, including the beachfront **Inara Siargao Resort**, an intimate five-suite property that can be booked on Instagram. Just before COVID-19 shutdowns, Siargao got additional cell towers to improve data connectivity, which will be a boon to tourism when it reopens to vaccinated international travelers. —Duncan Forgan



Athens

A cruising renaissance

Athens' post-pandemic recovery will be buoyed by the waves. Its chief seaport, **Piraeus**, the largest in Greece, is the locus of the revival of European cruising, as resort ships resume their circuits of Greece and the Aegean Sea. Passengers can choose from two new ships: Celebrity Cruises' luxury vessel the **Celebrity Apex**, and Silversea's new flagship, **Silver Moon**, which will both sail to islands including Santorini and Mykonos, with some itineraries including Cyprus and Haifa, Israel. And in a nod to the country's sporting past, the **Athens Olympic Museum** opened in May. —Tamara Hardingham-Gill

SIEM REAP, CAMBODIA

Wildlife and wonders

The lauded "temple town" of Siem Reap—a leafy riverside departure point to the majestic Angkor Wat—is in the midst of a metamorphosis as part of a grand modernization plan. New wider roads, cycle lanes, parking, car-free pavement and gardens will make for a more walkable city, while at **Angkor**, a forest network of shaded bike paths, pedestrian boulevards, landscaping and the removal of vendors have reduced the bustle, providing peace to a sacred experience. Bonus: the return of wildlife—otters frolicking in moats, gibbons swinging in the treetops—thanks to concerted reintroduction efforts at the **Angkor Archaeological Park**. Back in town, the hip Wat Bo quarter is the new address of atmospheric cocktail spot **Miss Wong**; boho **Laundry Bar**, a favorite of expats and locals alike known for its live gigs and DJ sets; vegetarian fusion at farm-to-table restaurant **Banlle**; along with new waterfront pop-up bars, beer gardens and vegan street-food stalls. —Lara Dunston



Costa Rica

Committed to conservation

Thanks to Costa Rica's conservation efforts, forests now cover 53% of the country's lands—a dramatic reversal after decades of severe deforestation—and 98% of its energy comes from renewable sources, a strong step toward its goal of becoming one of the world's first decarbonized nations by 2050. The ethos of Costa Rica's newest hotels aligns with the country's commitment to sustainability: **Nayara Tented Camp (left)**, for example, has invested in reforestation efforts while offering cliff-top glamping with unmatched views of the Arenal volcano. The eco-conscious **Six Senses Papagayo**—with its own organic farm—will be the ultra-luxury hotel brand's first development in Central America. And solar panels power the new **Cielo Lodge**, overlooking the Pacific coastal village of Golfito.

—Sucheta Rawal



Khao Yai National Park, Thailand

Leave no trace

Thailand's most cherished natural wonders benefited from the pause in international and domestic tourism. Rangers in **Khao Yai National Park (above)**—a vast expanse of forest and grassland indented by rushing rivers and spectacular waterfalls—have reported an uptick in wildlife sightings during the pandemic, featuring a cast of animals including the Asian black bear and the gaur, the world's largest bovine. Indeed, authorities are doubling down on efforts to preserve the area's majesty—a recent, well-publicized initiative returned left-behind garbage to litterers' homes. The park has also seen another kind of growth with hotel openings such as the all-villa **Roukh Kiri Khao Yai** and the upcoming **InterContinental Khao Yai National Park**, which will feature upcycled train cars that have been transformed into luxury suites. —D.F.

Talkeetna, Alaska

Mountain majesties

Midway along the Alaska Railroad's 470-mile journey from Seward to Fairbanks, Talkeetna has long served as a quaint and convenient stopover on the way to Denali National Park. But a cosmopolitan vibe lurks beneath its 1890s edifices, evidenced by storefronts offering artisanal eats, like the newly opened **Mimi's Haus of Cheese**, along with gourmet coffee, craft beer and legal cannabis. A hot-air-balloon attraction arriving this summer will take tourists 250 ft. into the air, affording unfettered views of North America's tallest peak amid the Alaska Range. Upon their return to earth, **Talkeetna Alaskan Lodge** is jazzing up the overnight experience with the addition of 60 new high-end rooms.

—Brad Japhe

CÁCERES, SPAIN

A multitude of cultural riches

The traditional ochre-and-alabaster streets of Cáceres look like a scene from an old sepia photograph come to life. Located in Extremadura, Spain's least touristy region, Cáceres' old town, a unique mix of Roman, Islamic, Gothic and Renaissance architecture surrounded by large stone walls, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Just outside town, the **Hospes Palacio de Arenales & Spa** underwent an expansion and redecoration of its historic buildings in 2020, adding an infinity pool. Another addition is **El Museo Helga de Alvear**, which houses the country's most significant private collection of international contemporary art. A luxury 11-suite **Relais & Châteaux hotel**—complete with heated floors and marble bathtubs—will welcome guests to the refurbished Renaissance-era **Casa de los Paredes-Saavedra** this fall, and brand-new city tours highlight Jewish history, Muslim art and more. —Robin Catalano

REYKJAVÍK, ICELAND

Abuzz with openings

Reykjavík—Iceland's capital, fueled almost entirely by renewable energy—is alight with excitement. Upcoming hotel debuts include **Radisson Red Reykjavík**, a 203-room building painted red, black and white to reflect the country's basalt columns and lava flows, and the much hyped **Reykjavík Edition**, the first from a modern luxury resort chain to open in the city. Also new on the scene is downtown vegetarian takeaway restaurant **Chickpea**, offering freshly made falafel, flatbreads and more. The world-famous **Iceland Airwaves music festival** is set to resume later this year with acts such as singer-songwriters **Bartees Strange** and **Arlo Parks**, just as the aurora borealis returns to dance in the winter night sky. While the lively and colorful Reykjavík is a top-tier destination in its own right, it's also a perfect home base for a more remote getaway, with gorgeous but underappreciated coastal towns like **Vík** and **Seydisfjörður** just a day's drive away. —Alex Fitzpatrick

ACCRA, GHANA*A hub for creativity and culture*

Accessing the Ghanaian capital has become even easier this year, with last fall's debut of Qatar Airways flights from Doha and new thrice-weekly United Airlines service from Washington, D.C. And there are plenty of openings to help fill an itinerary: **ADA**, a contemporary gallery that launched late last year, showcases the work of emerging creatives—such as paintings by Nigerian artist Eniwaye Oluwaseyi and South African artist Zandile Tshabalala—from across Africa. A new architecture school, the **African Futures Institute (AFI)** debuts at the end of July, with a focus on cultivating regional talent. The AFI is the brainchild of Lesley Lokko, the founder and director of the Graduate School of Architecture in Johannesburg, in collaboration with award-winning Ghanaian architect David Adjaye. And next year, the **Pan African Heritage World Museum** is scheduled to open. It will house archives, exhibits, galleries and a theater, with the aim of being a key destination for visitors interested in connecting with Africa's history and its people's heritage.

—Rosalind Cummings-Yeates

HANOI*Renewed life in the Old Quarter*

Vietnam's 1,000-year-old capital is embracing change while maintaining a strong sense of identity. This balancing act is exemplified by the new **Capella Hanoi**, a 47-room hotel where architect Bill Bensley pays homage to the opera of the Roaring '20s, while the city's more flamboyant side is showcased in another major hotel opening: **Dolce by Wyndham Hanoi Golden Lake**, a glimmering building billed as the world's first gold-plated hotel. Hanoi's incredible street-food culture is another source of fierce civic pride. Lovers of pho, the city's signature dish, were gratified when **Pho Gia Truyen**—one of Hanoi's most legendary vendors—was recognized in Asia's 50 Best Restaurants "Essence of Asia" list in 2020, a collection of storied venues that represent the spirit of gastronomy in the region.

—Duncan Forgan

**Design District,
London***An affordable artistic incubator*

On the south side of the River Thames lies the Royal Borough of Greenwich, a buzzy neighborhood known for its maritime history and for being the home of the prime meridian, from which the world's time zones are measured. It's also home to the brand-new Design District, a car-free area comprising 16 buildings intended to provide an affordable home for creatives. For the first 12 months of its operation, creators can rent a desk, a floor or an entire building for just £5 (\$7) per sq. ft. The area is gearing up after 16 months of lockdowns and restrictions in the U.K. to welcome visitors once more with the plan to host the **Greenwich+Docklands International Festival**, which will showcase climate-related art installations—including artist Dan Acher's **We Are Watching**, a 10-story-high flag featuring an image of a giant eye—ahead of the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow in November. In early 2022, the charity Queercircle will open the **U.K.'s only permanent art space dedicated to LGBTQ+ artists**, in the Design District.

—Suyin Haynes

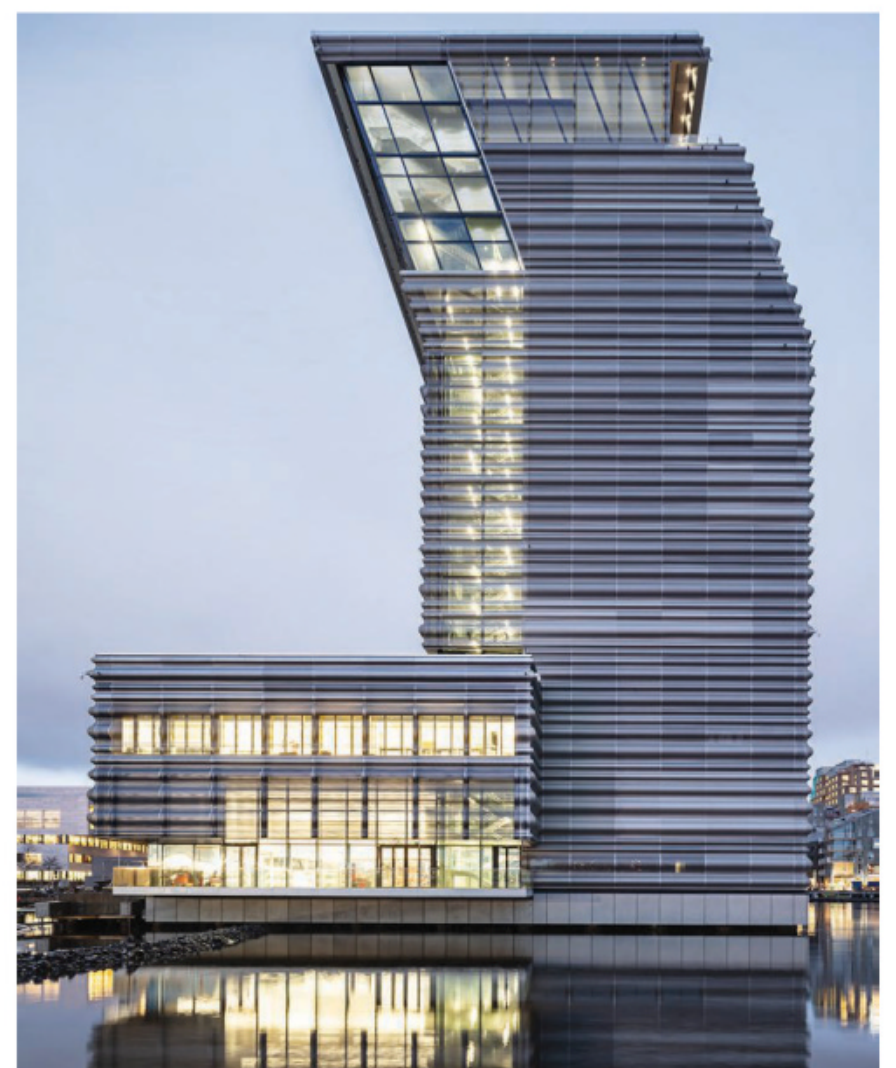
**HUDSON
VALLEY,
NEW YORK**
Brick by brick

The Hudson Valley, known for its country charm and succulent agriculture, is fast becoming one of the most popular locales in New York—thanks in part to an influx of city dwellers relocating during the pandemic, as well as the opening of **Lego-land** in Goshen. Travelers will also have their choice of new hotels: **Hutton Brickyards** in Kingston, with luxury cabins close to the Hudson River, and **The Maker**, a hotel, restaurant, lounge and café in Hudson that celebrates all things artisanal. Farther south, the revitalized **Blue Hill at Stone Barns** has a new chefs-in-residence program, bringing in more talents to shake up its famed kitchen.

—Diandra Barnwell

Oslo
Munch to do

This fall will see the opening of **Munch** (right), a waterfront museum in Oslo dedicated to the art and life of Edvard Munch, the famed Expressionist painter of *The Scream*. Despite the shutdowns, an eclectic roster of new restaurants and bars are also opening in Oslo, including **ZZ Pizza**, which serves pies inside an old car wash, and **La Mayor**, which will offer contemporary Mexican dishes with a focus on seafood. On Holmenkollen hill, above the city, **Rose Castle** is a new permanent art installation featuring paintings and sculptures that commemorate the invasion of Norway during World War II. And by 2022, some 27 miles north of Oslo, award-winning design firm **Snohetta's Solobservatoriet** will open as the largest solar observatory north of the Alps with a planetarium, northern-lights exhibit and more. —Terry Ward



OSLO: COURTESY ADRIÀ GOULA; MEMPHIS: COURTESY JAMIE HARMON—CENTRAL STATION



Memphis

Expanding on a legacy

Memphis, Graceland's home, is in the midst of an exciting evolution. In the historic South Main Arts District, the **Memphis Central Station** gleams after a careful restoration. Now, in addition to serving rail customers, the station also houses the Hilton-run **Central Station Hotel** (*above*), which features both a listening lounge with 500 vinyl albums celebrating the city's musical legacy, and **Bishop**, a French fine-dining spot from local James Beard

darlings Andrew Ticer and Michael Hudman. Meanwhile, the **Hyatt Centric Beale Street**—the first hotel on that famed stretch—has opened its doors. New dining options abound as well: sip in-house roasted coffee while mastering your Queen's Gambit at the **Memphis Chess Club's** downtown outpost; or consider stopping by the recently arrived **Bain BBQ food truck** for Texas-style smoked beef ribs and brisket. —*Jenny Peters*

Santiago de Compostela, Spain

A rare pilgrimage

For more than 1,000 years, Catholics have made the pilgrimage to this holy city in northern Spain to visit the shrine of St. James the Great, now the **Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela**. This year is the perfect time to join them: according to an ancient papal edict, if you pass through the cathedral's holy door in a year when the feast of St. James falls on a Sunday (as it does on July 25), you will be forgiven all your sins. The basilica is newly spruced up—its ornate baroque facade unobscured by renovation works for the first time in eight years. Hungry pilgrims can also enjoy the finest bacalao in Spain at **Solleiros** at the nearby Praza de Mazarelos. Last year, the restaurant's traditional recipe for salted cod beat 230 others to be named the best in the country. —*Dan Stewart*



KRUGER NATIONAL PARK, SOUTH AFRICA

On the wild side

The problem with train rides is that the scenery flashes by far too quickly. Not so with a newly opened South African hotel, **Kruger Shalati Train on the Bridge**, which, as the name suggests, is a revamped steam train parked on a bridge suspended over the Sabie River in the country's biggest game reserve. After Kruger National Park was established as a conservation area nearly 100 years ago, the local train service was largely discontinued for fear of disturbing the wildlife. By the 1970s, only the 984-ft.-long steel bridge remained. But the old carriages have been brought back, reimagined as luxury cabins with floor-to-ceiling windows promising unparalleled views over watering holes teeming with hippos, crocodiles, elephants, antelope, and the leopards and lions that stalk them. Unlike most trains, on this one you get to stick around to see what happens next. —*Aryn Baker*

SOUTHERN CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS, ROMANIA

Returning to nature

Formerly endangered by the illegal clear-cutting of forests and excessive hunting, Southern Carpathia's magical **Fagaras Mountains** are now center stage of efforts in Romania toward establishing a new national park. Nearly 3 million saplings have already been planted on reclaimed land, and animal populations are increasing too, with the reintroduction of bison in 2020. Foundation Conservation Carpathia is partnering with Steppes Travel and the European Nature Trust to run trips in the region, where a percentage of the proceeds from each booking gets poured back into rewilding and restoration projects. Combining stays in remote wildlife hides with nights at the family-run **Amfiteatrul eco-resort**, guests are invited here to experience the "Yellowstone of Europe." August 2021 will also see the return of **Fagaras Fest**, a celebration of the area's natural heritage, culture and biodiversity. —*Hannah Foster-Roe*

HELSINKI

Giving old spaces new purpose

Long recognized as an environmental leader, Finland's capital may soon be seen as a burgeoning art hot spot as well, propelled by projects like this summer's inaugural **Helsinki Biennial**. Hosted on the uninhabited Vallisaari Island, a former military base 20 minutes by ferry from the city center, the biennial will feature works by more than 40 artists and groups—including sculptor Pawel Althamer and filmmaker Wanuri Kahiu—that speak to the event's overarching themes of interdependence, sustainability, and creators' relationship with nature and the sea. Another recently repurposed landmark is a newly opened hotel, **Scandic Grand Central Helsinki**, housed inside the same Art Nouveau building as the historic Central Railway Station and developed in partnership with the Finnish Heritage Agency to protect the station's architectural and cultural integrity. Still in discussion: a refurbishing of the capital's Hanasaari coal-fired power plant, which under one proposal would become a gigantic hub for Helsinki's arts and culture scene after the plant ceases operations by 2024. —*Suyin Haynes*

SEATTLE

Visions of the future

In 1962, Seattle's Space Needle debuted at the World's Fair as a vision of the future. Some 60 years later, the city is wowing visitors with the groundbreaking **Climate Pledge Arena**. This \$1 billion project will be the world's first carbon-zero arena and will play host to the **Kraken**, a brand-new NHL team hitting the ice in the 2021–22 season—ice that will be made of collected rainwater. The city also has a dynamic restaurant scene, including the first fixed location from **Dat Creole Soul**, a popular food-truck business from chef Hampton Isom that will serve gumbo, jalapeño hush puppies and fried catfish. For something else old that's new again, reserve a table at **Canlis**, a 70-year-old restaurant that just named Aisha Ibrahim as its first female executive chef. —*Stacey Leasca*

Patagonia National Park, Chile

Sustainable investments

Chile's **Patagonia National Park** has long been a destination for travelers from across the globe seeking an adventure in nature and/or a luxury retreat (standouts include **Tierra Patagonia Hotel & Spa** and **Explora Lodge**). Now the park has also become a beacon of clean energy. Since last September, it has been powered by 100% renewable energy, thanks to the installation of a new hydroelectric-solar microgrid. And earlier this year, the regional government announced more than \$5 million in funding to improve trails, create a state-of-the-art visitor center and add infrastructure—including roads—to better serve the park's surrounding communities. The park system includes 10 million acres of land where condors, guanacos, pumas and many deer species can roam and be protected. —*Nadia-Elysse Harris*





A group on the river in Patagonia National Park in Chile



PARIS

The royal treatment

The City of Light may be in the midst of a 21st century infrastructural renaissance—including new bicycle lanes and a car-free city center—but its tourism offerings maintain their ties to the region's rich past. In May, the **Bourse de Commerce–Pinault Collection**, a contemporary art gallery in France's former commodities exchange, opened. Designed by Japanese architect Tadao Ando, it hosts the vast art collection of luxury-goods tycoon François Pinault, joining the ranks of collections from Fondation Louis Vuitton (by Frank Gehry) and Fondation Cartier (by Jean Nouvel) in Paris art spaces. Not far from the capital, the new **Airelles Château de Versailles, Le Grand Contrôle**, a 14-bedroom hotel in a 17th century mansion designed by Louis XIV's favorite architect, Jules Hardouin-Mansart, has debuted amid the famed palace's formal gardens. With a signature Alain Ducasse restaurant, a wellness center and an indoor swimming pool, guests can live—if briefly—like modern kings. —Dana Thomas

CHIMANIMANI NATIONAL PARK, MOZAMBIQUE

Doubling down on conservation

Decades ago, poaching in the Chimanimani Mountains helped fund wars. But now, Mozambique's recently designated Chimanimani National Park, located in Zimbabwe-bordering Manica province, is a testament to the country's ongoing conservation efforts. With a vast landscape including Mozambique's highest peak, **Mount Binga**, the park is home to rare mountain elephants and dozens of birds, reptiles, butterflies and plants that are unique to the area. Guided-tour groups in both Mozambique and Zimbabwe recommend Chimanimani as a top attraction, boasting walking and hiking trails untouched by cars—and the chance of glimpsing some of the hundreds of species identified by recent biodiversity studies in the area. —N.H.

SINGAPORE

Superlative city-state

Singapore frequently tops lists as one of the world's greenest, safest and most ethnically diverse cities, among other superlatives. Adding to the Southeast Asian city-state's many attributes: the sleek and centrally located **The Clan Hotel Singapore**, which opened this year with a top-floor infinity pool and a Rolls-Royce airport transfer for suite guests. By contrast, the new 198-room **Dusit Thani Laguna hotel**—on the grounds of the **Laguna National Golf & Country Club**, about 10 miles from the city center—feels like an isolated oasis. It offers access to two championship golf courses, three swimming pools and a Thai-influenced spa, as well as a complimentary shuttle to downtown. In an effort to further boost local tourism, Singapore is extending its **SingapoRediscovers** program—originally slated to end in June—through the end of the year, issuing vouchers to residents worth around \$74 to spend on tours, hotel accommodations, attraction tickets and more. —*Dan Q. Dao*

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

Reveling in art

The largest public collection of contemporary Inuit art in the world is housed in a groundbreaking cultural campus, **Qaumajuq**, which opened this spring in Winnipeg. Inuktitut for “it is bright, it is lit,” Qaumajuq has a scallop-shaped exterior inspired by the landscapes of the northern reaches of Canada. The collection includes more than 14,000 pieces of Inuit art, and the museum's leadership aims to foreground Inuit with its **Indigenous Advisory Circle**, which offers guidance on exhibitions and programming. The opening of Qaumajuq highlights the creative side of Winnipeg, a prairie city that is also home to the acclaimed **Royal Winnipeg Ballet**. Other cultural offerings include the **annual Warming Huts contest**—in which competitors design and build small, hutlike shelters or installations along the frozen river—and winter's acclaimed **New Music Festival**, where subzero outdoor concerts are played on instruments made of ice.

—*Karen Burshtein*



Zurich

Culture you can bank on

Although known as a financial center, Zurich also ranks among the most livable cities in the world and boasts the highest concentration of creative-industry companies in Switzerland. Its young creatives are revitalizing formerly industrial neighborhoods like Districts 4 and 5 in the west. The opening of **Bridge**, a market and food hall with funky cafés and artisanal purveyors, complements nearby art galleries, including the

Museum for Design, which hosts exhibitions on fashion and other aspects of design. Zurich's first capsule hotel, **Green Marmot**, offers an affordable and modern alternative to the ubiquity of five-star accommodations. And the extension of **Kunsthaus** (*above*), which will make it the country's largest art museum when it opens in October, is certain to cement the city's cultural bona fides. —*Michelle Tchea*

Uyuni Salt Flats, Bolivia

Salt-flat homestays

Salar de Uyuni is perhaps Bolivia's best-known geological wonder, thanks to its blindingly white landscape. From December through April, rainwater blankets the salt-crusted surface, creating a mirror effect with the deep blue sky, melding into the distant horizon. Hot on the heels of **Kachi Lodge**—featured in TIME's 2019 World's Greatest Places—another destination hotel recently opened near the famous salt flats: **Explora's Uyuni Lodge**, a minimalist base close to Tunupa volcano and run in partnership with local families. It's part of the new **Travesía Atacama-Uyuni** experience, a multiday 4x4 journey taking travelers from the world's driest desert in Chile to the world's largest salt flats with local homestays in between.

—*Travis Levius*



A view at
the Oberoi
Marrakech



Marrakech, Morocco

A place of beauty

Marrakech's famous (and frenetic) medina is a test of navigational skills, but it's well worth visiting the winding alleyways and narrow market stalls. The lauded **El Fenn**, a hotel near the souks, has recently added new suites to its series of 12 interconnected *riads* (or traditional Moroccan homes), along with a new bar and add-ons to the spa. The **Oberoi Marrakech**, which debuted right before the pandemic, offers a respite, seated on a 28-acre estate dotted with citrus trees and courtyards with reflecting pools. Elsewhere, world-renowned chef Jean-Georges has opened two restaurants—one serving East Asian food and the other boasting some of the best pizza in the city—in the newly renovated **La Mamounia**, the almost century-old palace hotel frequented by Sir Winston Churchill, for whom the property's iconic bar is named. —*Diandra Barnwell*

BIG SKY, MONT.

The great wide open

Montana's premier ski-country destination is primed to lose its under-the-radar status as flocks of all-weather outdoor enthusiasts embrace its proximity to Yellowstone and the cowboy energy of nearby Bozeman. Big Sky is reveling in its cool-kid status, thanks in part to a pandemic-related boom (and hit TV shows *Yellowstone* and *Big Sky*). This year's most seismic shift is the November opening of the luxury **Montage Big Sky**, a ski-in, ski-out resort with a private golf course, a bowling alley and access to four miles of private riverways for fly-fishing. Airlines, too, are betting on Big Sky's appeal: Alaska recently added more flights to Bozeman, and new Southwest flights began taking off in the spring.

—*Stacey Lastoe*

VENICE

Future-proofing an icon

After a truly lousy 18 months—first the devastating floods of November 2019, followed by the COVID-19 pandemic—Venice is ready to begin again. Its focus: mitigating the crowds and the floods that have threatened the city's fragile infrastructure. Authorities are proposing curbs on Airbnb lettings; cruise ships have been barred from sailing through the city center; and day-trippers will pay a tax from January 2022, reducing the load on the city's delicate streets. Meanwhile, newly functioning barriers mean increased protection against flooding, with extra protection on the way for the low-lying St. Mark's Square. In 2017, the city banned new hotel developments in the city center—meaning **Ca' di Dio**, a five-star hotel opening this summer, will be one of the last grand additions, as will the **Radisson Collection Hotel, Palazzo Nani**, located in a 16th century patricians' home. Local businesses are doing their bit too—like Go Guide, a group of 19 local tour guides who joined forces to create itineraries that take visitors beyond the popular sights of the **Rialto Bridge** and **St. Mark's Basilica** to unknown corners such as the city's ancient red-light district and a medieval banking area. The basilica, which was closed for restoration after those 2019 floods, has since reopened. —*Julia Buckley*

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Time Off

A woman with short, wavy brown hair is standing in front of a teal, pleated curtain. She is wearing a black, long-sleeved, form-fitting dress with a high slit on the left leg and black high-heeled shoes. She has her hands on her hips and is looking towards the camera. The background is a solid teal color with the texture of the curtain.

NEXT STEPS
Actor Tommy Dorfman looks to the future, in conversation with novelist Torrey Peters

INSIDE

TELEVISION'S MALE-IDENTITY CRISIS

DEV PATEL'S HAPLESS KNIGHT GAWAIN

VAL: A PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GIZELLE HERNANDEZ FOR TIME

Time Off is reported by Nik Popli and Simone Shah

INTERVIEW

Tommy Dorfman would like to clarify

By Torrey Peters

HOLLYWOOD BEGAN TO TAKE NOTICE SOON after I published my debut novel *Detransition, Baby*—which follows a trans woman, a cis woman and a trans woman who has detransitioned as they try to form an unconventional family—in early 2021. One of the calls was from the actor Tommy Dorfman. I figured Tommy would ask about a role in a potential adaptation. But no—it turned out Tommy just wanted to connect with me as a fellow queer storyteller trying to navigate the waters of the film industry and a culture in flux. We talked for two hours: it was a rare, genuine call from an artist who simply wanted to bond over telling stories.

Before then, I knew Tommy only by reputation, as the actor who rose to fame in 2017 in the role of Ryan Shaver, the conniving, scene-stealing poet on the Netflix series *13 Reasons Why*. I kept hearing about Tommy from artists I respected. When everyone I knew was debating Jeremy O. Harris' *Slave Play*, Tommy was tapped to star in Harris' off-Broadway project *Daddy*, alongside Ronald Peet, Hari Nef and the legendary Alan Cumming.

And now, Tommy is set to direct an adaptation of Mason Deaver's *I Wish You All the Best*, is starring this fall in the Channel 4 limited series *Fracture* and has a role in Lena Dunham's upcoming film *Sharp Stick*. But this work is only one part of Tommy's public presence: with a quick glance at Instagram, it becomes clear—even if you don't recognize all the brand names (which I don't)—that Tommy dresses fashionably, with fashionable people, in fashionable places. Tommy embodies a very modern type of celebrity, one that's increasingly influential—and increasingly scrutinized. And there's something that both paparazzi and Tommy's followers began to notice over the past year or so: a change in Tommy's style and appearance. People began to speculate what that shift might mean in the comments and on blogs; some of the speculation has been lurid, some tentatively supportive. And yet, for the past year, Tommy has said nothing, acknowledged no change, just continued on—until now.

Torrey Peters: We're friends—we're casual. So why are we having a formal conversation today in TIME?

Tommy Dorfman: We're talking today to discuss my gender. For a year now, I have been privately identifying and living as a woman—a trans woman.

Peters: Would you say that you are coming out?

Dorfman: It's funny to think about coming out, because I haven't gone anywhere. I view today as a reintroduction to me as a woman, having made a transition medically. Coming out is always viewed as this grand reveal,

but I was never not out. Today is about clarity: I am a trans woman. My pronouns are she/her. My name is Tommy.

Peters: You've been transitioning for a year. That much seemed obvious to me from your Instagram. What's the difference between announcing it now, and letting your transition be implicit, as you've been doing?

Dorfman: I've been living in this other version of coming out where I don't feel safe enough to talk about it, so I just do it. But I recognize that transitioning is beautiful. Why not let the world see what that looks like? So I kept, on Instagram, a diaristic time capsule instead—one that shows a body living in a more fluid space. However, I've learned as a public-facing person that my refusal to clarify can strip me of the freedom to control my own narrative. With this medical transition, there has been discourse about my body, and it began to feel overwhelming. So, recently I looked to examples of others who have come out as trans. There's the version I couldn't really afford to do, which is to disappear for two years and come back with a new name, new face and new body. But that's not what I wanted.

'This is an evolution of Tommy. I'm becoming more Tommy.'

TOMMY DORFMAN,
on transitioning and
keeping her name

Peters: Do you think that older way of coming out—where you go away and come back and announce a new name and identity—is still viable?

Dorfman: For me, personally, it's not viable. I'm not changing my name. I'm named after my mom's brother who passed a month after I was born, and I feel very connected to that name, to an uncle who held me as he was dying. This is an evolution of Tommy. I'm becoming more Tommy.

Peters: I like that idea: transition as an amplification of yourself rather than a qualitative change.

Dorfman: It is not transition. Or it is, but not as an idea of going somewhere. Just that I am actually myself.

Peters: The expectation that trans people must go away to medically transition strikes me as a burden. People have to work, to live their lives, even as they transition.



Dorfman: It's completely unrealistic and unsustainable, especially when trans people are some of the most disenfranchised and disadvantaged people.

Peters: It's an incredibly fraught moment for LGBTQ youth in the U.S. How do you feel about what's happening in our country?

Dorfman: There have been dozens of bills in the last six months [introduced] directly to inhibit the success, safety and livelihoods of trans people, specifically trans youth. I always suggest engaging on a personal level: personalize your activism and advocacy, find the organization closest to you that you can assist. If you don't feel comfortable using your body to be of service but you have monetary capabilities, do that. Educate yourself as much as possible.

Peters: Why did you want to discuss your trans identity in *TIME*,

specifically? *TIME* was the magazine that declared "The Transgender Tipping Point" in 2014, with actor Laverne Cox on the cover. More recently, actor Josie Totah came out in *TIME*, and Elliot Page gave his first interview to *TIME* after coming out. What is your intervention in that history of precedents?

Dorfman: When we come out, we're always in conversation with every other coming-out. *TIME* is a news source that has centered this kind of storytelling for a long time, from Ellen DeGeneres on. My intervention is evolution—I'm just another person transitioning. I'm showing gender fluidity; how fast and dynamic and vulnerable it can be, how it's an ongoing thing.

Peters: Is there a difference for you in coming out personally and professionally?

Dorfman: It's impossible for me to

separate my personal and professional transition, because my body and face are linked to my career. I'm most recognized for playing a bitchy gay poet on a soap opera, and I feared that by actively transitioning in my personal life, I would lose whatever career I've been told I'm supposed to have. But I'm no longer interested in playing "male" characters—except for maybe in a "Cate Blanchett playing Bob Dylan" way. Sometimes you just have to say, "No, this is just who I f-cking am."

Peters: What's next for you, in work and in life?

Dorfman: I'm thinking about how I can infuse my trans body into film and television. Lena Dunham gave me my first role as a girl last year—it was so exciting and validating. And personally, it's wild to be 29 and going through puberty again. Some days I feel like I'm 14. As a result of that shift, the types of romantic partnerships I seek out are different. I was in a nine-year relationship in which I was thought of as a more male-bodied person, with a gay man. I love him so much, but we've been learning that as a trans woman, what I'm interested in is not necessarily reflected in a gay man. So we've had incredible conversations to redefine our relationship as friends. Transitioning has been liberating and clarifying.

Peters: Is there some grief and loss in that too? Everyone has to say that transition is amazing, but I personally feel that loss is also a part of it.

Dorfman: Yes, there's a way in which in order to justify transition, you have to say everything was terrible before. And the sad part is you don't get to acknowledge some of what you're leaving. One doesn't have to medically transition to be trans, but for me, it was an active choice. I'm aligning my body with my soul. Yet as a result of that, I am losing some things. I have to reckon with the fact that I brought along a lot of people and things who might not end up being there for this part of my journey. All I can do now is look to a future where I am, hopefully, just radically honest. That's the person I am becoming. —With reporting by SPENCER BAKALAR

□

TimeOff Television

ESSAY

Ted Lasso and TV's strange quest to build a perfect man

By Judy Berman

TED LASSO WAS EITHER TV'S MOST OR least surprising breakout hit of 2020. On one hand, it was a sitcom adapted from a series of commercials and debuting on the relatively overlooked Apple TV+ platform. But it was also a sweet soccer comedy with a recognizable star, co-creator Jason Sudeikis, that arrived at a midlockdown moment when the demand for comfort viewing and sports content was surging.

The combination proved irresistible. Instead of disappearing on Apple TV+, it built word-of-mouth momentum to become the service's first big hit. Sudeikis won a Golden Globe for his performance as an American-football coach imported to helm an English Premier League team, and the show recently scored 20 Emmy nominations. Fans, critics and awards voters all seemed to be responding to the show's fundamental decency. Here was a comedy about a straight white man's man—immersed in the heterosexual, homosocial world of pro sports—who's also thoughtful, nurturing, kind.

The crisis in male identity that has been escalating for the past half-century has had a profound effect on depictions of men in pop culture. For socially conscious creators, the increasingly common association of masculinity with misogyny and sexual misconduct presents a problem. How do you write a male character—especially one who's straight, white and cisgender—who is likable, relatable and maybe even aspirational for the typical viewer who shares his identity, without making that guy odious to everyone who doesn't?

Ted Lasso, which returns for a second season July 23, solves this by making its protagonist a sort of happy-go-lucky fantasy creature, the kind of magical role model usually confined to children's stories. Ted is hardly the only idealized male specimen in entertainment made for grownups, of course, but I've never seen another fictional character who seemed so deliberately constructed to teach other adult men how to behave in the world.

IN THE NBC SPORTS PROMO that introduced him in 2013, Ted Lasso has been inexplicably summoned across the Atlantic to coach Tottenham Hotspur—despite his ignorance of the basics of soccer. After three days of cleat-in-mouth moments, he's fired. Yet his goofy, quixotic, quintessentially American optimism earned the character a following.



Sudeikis plays Ted Lasso as an antidote to the toxic masculinity that's come to be familiar, onscreen and off



A slightly different, even more endearing version of Ted appears in the show's pilot. This one isn't stupid. He knows he's likely to become the laughingstock of the sports world. He's just positive enough to believe he can learn and secure enough to shrug off the ridicule. "Ted knows that he's being insulted; he just knows that, 'Well, they don't know me well enough to really be talking about me,'" Sudeikis explained on *Late Night With Seth Meyers*. "It doesn't rattle him in the least." Besides, Ted's marriage is in trouble. Moving thousands of miles to coach AFC Richmond is a way of honoring his wife's request for space.

As the first season unfolds, his good qualities keep multiplying. A paternal figure to his players, he cares more about teamwork and good sportsmanship than winning. He's jovial, culturally literate and enlightened on issues of social justice. A typical Lasso-ism: "You beatin' yourself up is like Woody Allen playin' the clarinet: I don't wanna hear

TED LASSO: APPLE TV+

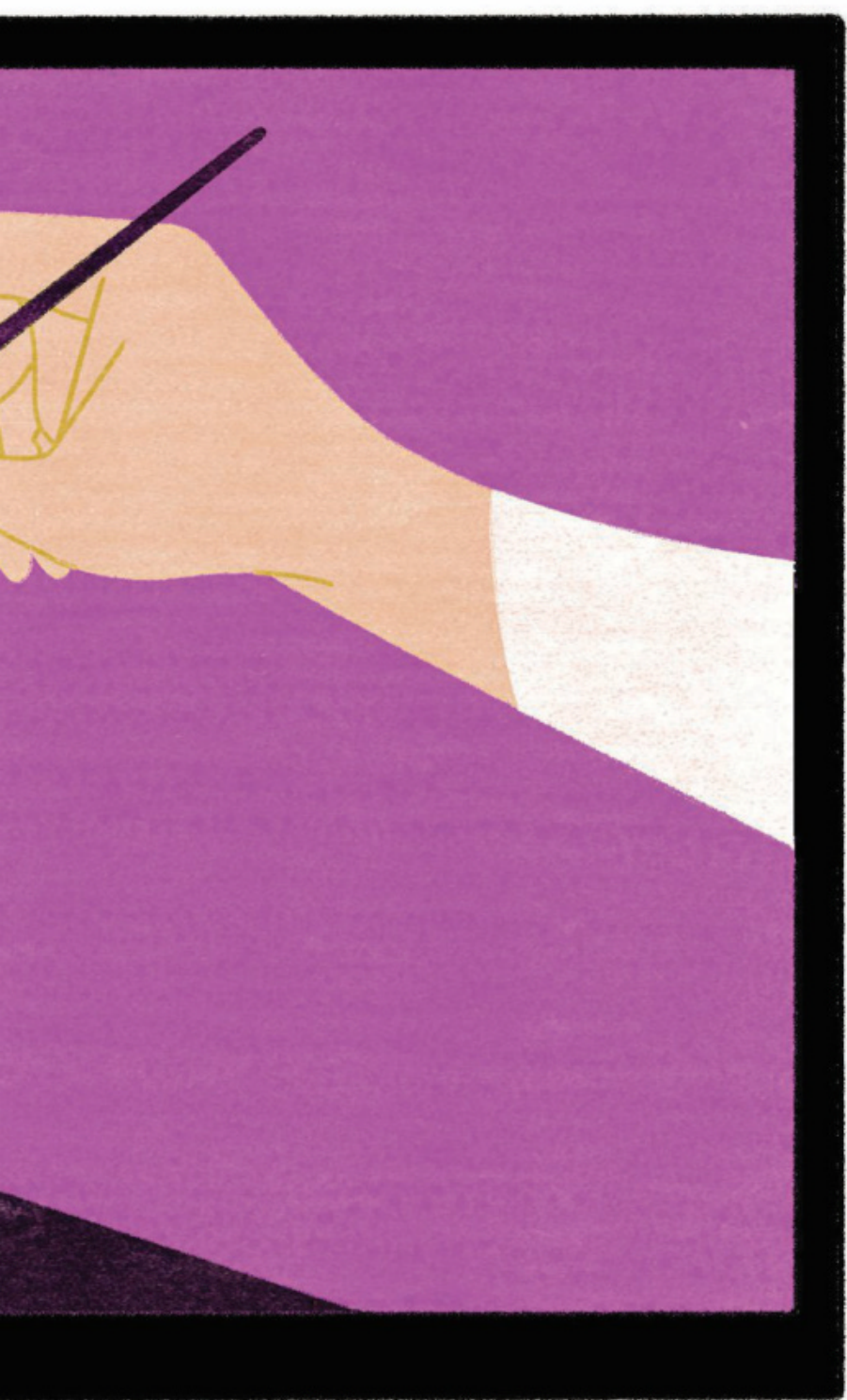


ILLUSTRATION BY ALEX NABAUM FOR TIME

it.” He values the contributions of his staff and treats women with respect. In Season 2, we learn that he’s even a superlative lover. “So eager to please,” a satisfied one-night stand raves.

Surrounding Ted are deeply flawed people—mostly men. Season 1 finds hothead team captain Roy Kent (Brett Goldstein), once a powerhouse, past his prime and too defined by his past to imagine life after football. Star player Jamie Tartt (Phil Dunster) has a massive ego and a taste for bullying. His favorite punching bag is nebbishy equipment manager Nathan (Nick Mohammed).

Ted figures out how to get the best out of these men as players and as people. Over the course of that season, he pumps up Nate, who turns out to have great strategic insights. He benches Jamie to prove that bad behavior won’t fly even from a top goal scorer, before realizing the lad could use some TLC. Instead of taming Roy, Ted counsels him to harness his anger as an asset. Ted’s superpowers are traits more

often associated with women: he listens to people, intuitively what they need and cares enough to help.

SELFLESSNESS SETS TED APART most from so many other TV protagonists framed as epitomizing masculinity. In the late ’90s, *The Sopranos* ushered in the age of the antihero. Brilliant, flawed, messy if not outright violent characters like Don Draper, Walter White, *The Wire*’s Stringer Bell and Al Swearengen of *Deadwood* were men of action, not emotion. They would literally murder people, build meth empires or drink themselves into stupors instead of going to therapy. (Tony Soprano famously went to therapy but never stopped killing.) Their creators solved the problem of representing masculinity by making these characters terrible, enviable and internally conflicted all at once.

Comedy has seen its share of influential male antiheroes as well, from “social assassin” Larry David on *Curb Your Enthusiasm* to *New Girl*’s prickly problem drinker Nick Miller. Lovable sitcom dads are harder to find in the 21st century, and might be altogether absent if it weren’t for a wave of uplifting shows featuring queer (*Modern Family*) or nonwhite (*black-ish*, *Fresh Off the Boat*) fathers. More enduring has been the Neanderthal sitcom husband, forged in *The Honeymooners*, perfected by *All in the Family* and regurgitated in *The King of Queens* and *Last Man Standing*. The archetype remains so entrenched that it was recently satirized in AMC’s *Kevin Can F**k Himself*.

Yet *Kevin* couldn’t exist without a critical mass of viewers growing weary of the man-baby couch potato. It’s that same, younger audience that embraced Ted Lasso and his forerunners: the fantasy manly men who populate the gentlest contemporary sitcoms. *Parks and Recreation* gave us Nick Offerman’s Ron Swanson, a rugged libertarian who holds zero problematic views and is putty in the hands of strong women. Even in a pandemic-set reunion, Ron

said nothing negative about what many real people with his politics saw as a mask-mandating nanny state. Consider, also, Johnny Rose (Eugene Levy) of *Schitt’s Creek*. This is a man who gained and lost a fortune without knowingly participating in any nefarious financial schemes; he’s not even incompetent. Resplendent in designer suits, Johnny embraces his downfall as a chance to spend more time with his family.

I enjoyed both shows, just as I enjoy *Ted Lasso*. But there’s something weirdly brittle about the way these characters are constructed. They’re simply too perfect, their personalities so meticulously designed to balance macho cred with sensitive masculinity that they can withstand no external pressure. Why is TV so desperate to create not just a good man, but the best man? Why, when Ted Lasso’s separation comes up, is the

only explanation provided that his wife finds his optimism exhausting? Would the whole character crumble if, say, he were just a workaholic?

It might. Because Ted isn’t a real person. He’s a role model, like Harry Potter or Mary Poppins or Superman. And there’s something depressing about how Ted, Ron and Johnny come off as teaching tools more than as

funnier versions of real-life men. It’s hard to address a crisis in masculinity when, as a culture, we can’t imagine what a decent, unexceptional guy might look like.

To the extent that TV mirrors society, the creation of positive male characters will be fraught for as long as the cluster of systemic ills known as “toxic masculinity” endures. Meanwhile, though, I’m not sure it helps to tie idealized male characters to traditionally masculine traits—the profeminist bootstrapper, the loving soccer coach. In many ways, this Good Man™ reminds me of another fantasy figure, the girlboss, whose female identity magically redeems attributes we associate with ruthless men. Isn’t it possible that gender essentialism is exacerbating things? Whether male, female or nonbinary, the characters we need most now may well be ones defined by anything but their gender. □

‘How would I be adding to the Michael Scotts and Don Drapers and Tony Sopranos?’

JASON SUDEIKIS,
on why he decided not to
create another antihero
character, to Collider



REVIEW

A movie both of its time and splendidly outside it

By Stephanie Zacharek

IN A GUTTURAL GROWL, AS IF POSSESSED BY A DEMON, A medieval queen reads aloud a threatening letter that has just been delivered by a gargantuan bark-covered warrior on an equally imposing steed. She faints as she reaches the letter's final line; the paper drops to the floor and bursts into flames. Cinema! There's nothing more ridiculous, or more awesome.

There is no *lettre flambée*, specifically, in the late 14th century poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. But it's part of the embroidery writer-director David Lowery uses to fill out his extravagant unicorn tapestry of a movie, *The Green Knight*, a detail that makes this ambitious adaptation feel both lived-in and magickal, with all the self-aware grandiosity that superfluous ancient *k* implies.

Dev Patel stars as the aimless yet mildly arrogant young knight-to-be Gawain, who, as the movie opens, still lives with his mother (Sarita Choudhury) and isn't quite sure how he feels about his adoring girlfriend (Alicia Vikander), a no-nonsense tomboy seductress in a pixie cut. He is also, though, a nephew of King Arthur (Sean Harris). And so when the king's Christmas revels are interrupted by that foreboding, mystical tree-man on horseback (Ralph Ineson), Gawain is there at his uncle's side, ready to prove his worth. In the letter that makes Queen Guinevere (Kate Dickie) faint, the Green Knight—a disgruntled emissary of the natural world, bearing a holly branch in one hand and a murder-ready ax in the other—proposes a game: he invites one of the king's knights to lop off his head. But in a year's time, that knight must seek him out and unflinchingly accept the same blow in return.



Patel, as the Gawain of legend, plays a knight in search of valor—and himself

Gawain accepts the challenge with aplomb. The big green one then scoops up his severed head, remounts his snorting horse and thunders off, reminding the young knight of their date one year hence. The rest of *The Green Knight* details Gawain's quest, a test of his honesty and virtue, whose penultimate stop is a grand castle presided over by a gregarious nobleman (Joel Edgerton) and his beguiling wife, who just happens to be the spitting image of Gawain's girlfriend back home (Vikander again, this time decked in flowing silks and fab jewels). A blindfolded crone hovers nearby every minute; what's *her* deal? Gawain is about to find out.

THIS MOVIE'S SOURCE MATERIAL was written by an unknown poet, circa 1400. Lowery (*A Ghost Story*, *The Old Man & the Gun*), in addition to fleshing out the story, puts his stamp all over it so confidently that the results could be annoying, if they weren't so enchanting. His view of medieval England, by way of locations in Ireland, is a vision of verdant ivy and glowering cloud cover, of skeleton-littered battlefields and chambers brushed with torchlight. Lowery has cited Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* and Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V* as inspirations; the film also hints at John Boorman's Arthurian extravaganza *Excalibur* and Guillermo del Toro's sylvan fantasy *Pan's Labyrinth*. What Lowery ends up with is a little Led Zeppelin, a little Fairport Convention.

Patel's job here is to play a youth figuring himself out even as he yearns for recognition and status, and in general, he may be better at channeling exuberance than at teasing out ghost threads of introspection. Even so, he makes a fine Gawain, largely on the strength of his face, its planes defined by a manicured beard, ruminative eyes, overgrown-forest eyebrows. It's the face of a hapless saint, lifted from a Byzantine icon, who doesn't know what to do with his fame. And that's Gawain, heroic in the end, but only just barely. He's a knight by the skin of his teeth in a movie that's both of its time and splendidly out of step with it, an act of necromancy in a CGI world. □

'I was thinking, Maybe I could do something with a character on a horse, going on a quest.'

DAVID LOWERY, in *Entertainment Weekly*, on the genesis of his adaptation of a 14th century Arthurian story



Damon: casually great

REVIEW

Stillwater is Matt Damon's show

In Tom McCarthy's somber thriller *Stillwater*, Matt Damon plays the ultimate ham-fisted American in France: his Bill Baker is an Oklahoma oil-rig worker who travels to Marseille to visit his estranged daughter (Abigail Breslin), who's serving a prison sentence there for a murder she claims she didn't commit. Though he speaks no French and is generally known to make a mess of things, Bill attempts to investigate new evidence in the case, drawing a local single mom (Camille Cottin) and her young daughter (Lilou Siauvaud) into an increasingly tangled net.

Stillwater was loosely inspired by the case of Amanda Knox—who spent nearly four years in an Italian prison after being convicted in the 2007 murder of a fellow exchange student—though the movie follows its own twisty, at times ill-advised path. But Damon is turning out to be one of those great, casual American actors we didn't know we had anymore. As Bill—affable but given to brooding; bright but prone to bad choices—he's almost too big for his own skin, a decent guy who finds that responsibility, once he decides to accept it, is even heavier than his clumpy work boots. It's a terrific performance, an adamant yes in a movie that's sometimes a *non*. —S.Z.

REVIEW

A bold, headstrong actor looks back

NOW THAT WE'RE USED TO RECORDING our whole lives on cell phones, it's hard to imagine an era when we didn't walk around with mini movie cameras in our pockets. In the early 1980s, Val Kilmer—who would go on to give vibrant performances in movies like *The Doors* (1991) and *Tombstone* (1993)—became an early adopter of video recorders. Footage Kilmer shot through the years, as well as some from the present, provides the backbone for the documentary *Val*, directed by Leo Scott and Ting Poo, which draws us deep into the life and career of a bold and sometimes headstrong performer.

Kilmer got his first Broadway role after graduating from Juilliard, playing third banana to Sean Penn and Kevin Bacon in 1983's *Slab Boys*. Backstage footage from that lark shows three beautiful, boisterous young men, practically kids, who have no clue how their careers are going to unfurl. Some of Kilmer's later video recordings cast him in a more unflattering light: we see him sassing back as director John Frankenheimer tries to keep order during the filming of the ill-fated 1996 fantasy adventure *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, which Kilmer saw as his

big chance to work with one of his idols, Marlon Brando. While it's often hard to pinpoint what makes a film a disaster, unruly actors rarely help.

Yet *Val*, equal parts swaggering and wistful, keeps us squarely on Kilmer's side, suggesting that if he was ever difficult on set, it was only because he cared so much about every project he took on. This deeply personal scrapbook is particularly resonant now that Kilmer's career has been curtailed by throat cancer; he can speak, but he is still learning how to shape sounds. (Much of the documentary is narrated by his son, Jack, reading words written by Kilmer.)

Footage of Kilmer today, slightly puffy and arrayed in turquoise-and-silver jewelry, shows him signing Batman memorabilia at Comic-Con—a detail that could be stinging, considering how much Kilmer hated making his single entry in the franchise, 1995's *Batman Forever*. Yet Kilmer, speaking in his own voice, says he doesn't mind these events; he's grateful that people still care. *Val* is a portrait of an actor who poured his all into his work. Only now can he see what it amounts to, and find some vindication in the truth that it was worth defending all along. —S.Z.



Kilmer gives us the view from behind the camera, as well as in front of it

ESSAY

The legacy of Britney Spears

By Maura Johnston

ON JULY 17, BRITNEY SPEARS TOOK TO INSTAGRAM for a broadside against critics of the spunky dancing videos she shares on the platform. The profanity-laced missive touched on how even though she'd been hurt by her support system, she still had hope. Not to be ignored were the two potent words *I quit*, emphasized by four exclamation points. It's unknown whether Spears was quitting music or just over trying to please people. But the note echoed a statement by her now ex-manager Larry Rudolph, who wrote in his recent resignation letter of "her intention to officially retire."

While her plea for agency highlights recent revelations of her utter lack of it, both in her conservatorship hearings and in this year's documentary *Framing Britney Spears*, it also brings up a question about Spears' artistic legacy. She was the biggest pop star of the Y2K teen-pop era, and she still looms large today, with artists as varied as the nightmare-conjuring Billie Eilish and the alt-rock doyenne Courtney Love spotlighting her impact through interviews and cover songs. If the Britney Spears catalog turns out to be complete as it stands today, how will we look back on her career?

SPEARS GOT HER BIG BREAK as a preteen in the Disney machine as part of the revived *Mickey Mouse Club*. While some suits believed she would succeed only as a member of a group, her precocious delivery and girl-next-door appeal led to a solo deal. How those assets were managed wasn't entirely up to her at first. Superproducer Max Martin, who spearheaded "... Baby One More Time," among other hits, wanted to work with her because her young age made her malleable.

That full-length project, released in 1999, offered listeners a crash course in her strengths. Chief among them is her voice, which balances the husky, knowing qualities it displays on the title track with the wounded, searching emotionalism heard on ballads like the sparkling "Sometimes."

It's not clear how many of Spears' songwriting credits account for an entire song or a single line. Still, Britney Spears wouldn't be *Britney Spears* without the outsize appealing personality at the megastar's nucleus. Over the years, her catalog has been studded with songs that reflect her singular traits. Her 2011 comeback single "Hold It Against Me" pivots on a dated line, but her half-winking attitude makes it work. Tracks like the defiant "Stronger" and the hip-shaking "Overprotected"



As the #FreeBritney movement gains steam, the future of Spears' career is in question—but her impact on the pop landscape is undeniable

show off her inner strength, presaging her courage in speaking out against her conservatorship.

Spears' somnambulant performance at the 2007 MTV Video Music Awards—which followed a string of highly publicized personal challenges exacerbated by the cruel tabloid landscape of the era—felt like a sign that the very spirit that had launched her had been snuffed out. Even so, her release that year, *Blackout*, presaged the synth-heavier, moodier sounds soon to be embraced by Kanye West and Lady Gaga. Her four albums since then all sold well but were a mixed bag critically.

More than two decades after her debut, Spears' legacy as an artist is complex. In a recent interview, "Drivers License" singer Olivia Rodrigo—whose path from Disney to the pop charts bears broad similarities to Spears'—indicated that she sees the treatment of the elder pop supernova as a symbol of how easily pop stardom can be undermined by supposed allies. Spears' saga has fundamentally altered the pop-star dream. While her catalog is part of the canon that defines the first 20 years of this millennium, one hopes that the strength she's shown while enduring her public struggles will cement her true legacy: reshaping the machine that turns those songs into cultural touchstones. □

ILLUSTRATION BY ELEANOR SHAKESPEARE FOR TIME; SOURCE PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES (3)



When I grow up,
I want to be a
Teacher!

Last year, Sam was too sick to dream.
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I have a Chance!♥

10 Questions

Zaila Avant-garde The 14-year-old on being the Scripps National Spelling Bee's first Black American champ, her famous admirers and her future plans

What was a typical day like for you as you prepared for the bee this year? I try to do about 13,000 words, which is about seven hours of spelling, a day. I do school all year, six days a week, six hours a day, so that leaves a little bit more time, especially compared to two [or] three hours of basketball. My flexible school schedule, because I'm homeschooled, has really been a big help in all of this.

What was the key to your win? Luck. I can't know all the words in the whole dictionary, but I know a good portion of them—like, most of them, probably. But still, I can forget a word now and then. So a bit of luck and also lots of skill.

You've said you're hoping to see more kids in future spelling bees who look like you. What made you say that? It's not that they don't want to do it; I'm sure they would. It's just that they don't have the resources. A perfect example of what I am talking about is, I was talking to this guy and he told me he didn't have [the prep program] SpellPundit. I can't even describe what not having SpellPundit is like. Like having a book but no pages. His family just couldn't afford it. I mean, my family had a little bit of trouble affording it. It's the main problem: just not having access. For African-American and Hispanic children in particular, we just can't participate.

Did it make you nervous to be one of just a few Black kids competing? No, no. That didn't make me nervous at all. All that made me want to do was really want to win more.

But being the first or the only, it can be stressful. Was the possibility of making history on your mind? I started thinking about that a little bit on, like, my last word, when I knew I knew it—but I was mostly praying not to get a word I didn't know. There were so many good spellers there, you never know what could happen.

“THERE WERE
SO MANY GOOD
SPELLERS
THERE, YOU
NEVER KNOW
WHAT COULD
HAPPEN”



You got to go to the ESPYs after you won. Did you meet anyone exciting? I was really happy to meet Sha'Carri Richardson. I just always liked her, from the second I saw her. And I just found it a bit sad, her whole story. *[Richardson, a sprinter, was suspended from competition after she tested positive for marijuana.]* So help me, if I just got kicked out of the Tokyo Olympics, then I wouldn't be around to smile. I'd just be devastated. She seemed to be taking everything in stride and not being too beat down by it.

Lots of people are thrilled about your win. I wonder if there's anybody who you found out was paying attention that shocked you? It's a bit hard because when, say, Halle Berry congratulates me, or LeBron James, I really don't know, like, why. A lot of the times, I think that it's my spelling wins, and sometimes there's an immediate segue: "the winning speller—and she has Guinness World Records." *[She holds three records for bouncing, dribbling and juggling basketballs.]* So I am not sure if they are congratulating me on the basketball or the spelling part.

I understand you're hoping to go to Harvard. Is that right? Let's just say it goes along with some of my other life plans.

What are some of those plans? I'm definitely thinking about becoming an NBA basketball coach, or maybe working for NASA. I also have some interest in neuroscience and gene editing.

For now, I'm sure you're exhausted. You've had a long, long day, with appearances on shows all over New York City. What's on your mind? I'm looking out at the city of New York right now, and we've probably been to all the places, because we were just walking everywhere. —JANELLE ROSS

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